

# Much Ado about Nothing

*Edited by*  
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## ROLES IN THE PLAY

PRINCE, Don Pedro, of Aragon

**Lords, companions to the Prince**

BENEDICK, of Padua

CLAUDIO, of Florence

BALTHASAR, attendant on the Prince, singer

JOHN, the bastard brother of the Prince

**Followers of John**

BORACHIO

CONRAD

LEONATO, governor of Messina

HERO, his daughter

BEATRICE, his niece

BROTHER Antonio, an old man and brother  
to Leonato

**Waiting-gentlewomen attendant on Hero**

MARGARET

URSULA

FRIAR Francis

DOGBERRY, the constable in charge of the  
watch

VERGES, the headborough, Dogberry's partner

SEXTON

WATCH, the watchmen who report to Dogberry

BOY, a boy serving Benedick

ATTENDANTS and MESSENGERS

Title *Much Ado about Nothing* the word 'note' had several meanings to Elizabethans including 'observe', 'notice', 'pay special attention to', 'listen to', and 'overhear', actions which are all especially significant to the way the play's plot develops at several junctures. The pronunciations of 'nothing' and 'noting' were also very similar, and the title puns on this, as it does, more

crudely, on the sense of 'nothing' as female genitalia (compare *Hamlet* 9.103), taking in confused overhearing, misogynistic male sexual jealousy, and matters of no consequence as causes of the titular 'much ado'; conversely, the word 'nothing' is used to effect the stripped-back, confessional directness of the play's emotional fulcrum at 4.1.264–7.

## 1.1

Sc. 1 Enter Leonato (governor of Messina), [reading a paper,] Innogen (his wife), Hero (his daughter), and Beatrice (his niece), with a Messenger

LEONATO I learn in this letter, that Don Pedro of Aragon comes this night to Messina.

MESSENGER He is very near by this. He was not three leagues off when I left him.

5 LEONATO How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?

MESSENGER But few of any sort, and none of name.

LEONATO A victory is twice itself when the achiever brings home full numbers. I find here that Don Pedro hath bestowed much honour on a young Florentine called Claudio.

10 MESSENGER Much deserved on his part, and equally remembered by Don Pedro. He hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing in the figure of a lamb the feats of a lion. He hath indeed better bettered expectation than you must expect of me to tell you how.

LEONATO He hath an uncle here in Messina will be very much glad of it.

15 MESSENGER I have already delivered him letters, and there appears much joy in him—even so much, that joy could not show itself modest enough without a badge of bitterness.

LEONATO Did he break out into tears?

MESSENGER In great measure.

20 LEONATO A kind overflow of kindness, there are no faces truer than those that are so washed. How much better is it to weep at joy than to joy at weeping!

BEATRICE I pray you, is Signor Montanto returned from the wars, or no?

25 MESSENGER I know none of that name, lady. There was none such in the army of any sort.

LEONATO What is he that you ask for, niece?

HERO My cousin means Signor Benedick of Padua.

MESSENGER O, he's returned, and as pleasant as ever he was.

30 BEATRICE He set up his bills here in Messina, and challenged Cupid at the flight; and my uncle's fool, reading the challenge, subscribed for

Sc. 1 1.1.0.1 *Innogen* Few known performances have staged this 'ghost' character. In one production, Innogen was mute and used sign language to communicate.

1.1.1 LEONATO Interpretations of Leonato range from a powerful governor with a lavish costume and air of nobility to a doddering, good-natured rural gentleman with a simple costume and friendly countenance.

1.1.23 BEATRICE Beatrice's delivery may range from playful to caustic. Sometimes she wears masculine clothing or relatively simple women's wear compared to the lavish costumes of the other females.

Sc. 1 1.1.0.2 *Hero* for Shakespeare's audience the name would have immediately recalled the Greek legend famously retold in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (printed in 1598), in which Hero renounced her duties as a priestess of Venus for her lover, Leander, who drowned while swimming the Hellespont to be with her; she in turn drowned herself, and is therefore a somewhat complicated, contradictory figure associated with both chastity and sensual love (forgoing one for the other), as well as both inconstancy and its extreme opposite

1.1.0.2 *Beatrice* from the Latin *beatrix* meaning 'one who blesses'; Benedick somewhat reciprocally derives from *benedictus* meaning 'blessed'

1.1.1 *Aragon* region in north-west Spain

1.1.2 *Messina* port city in north-east Sicily

1.1.3 *three leagues* about 9 miles

1.1.5 *action* battle

1.1.6 *sort* high social rank

1.1.6 *name* reputation; noble family

1.1.7 *achiever* winner

1.1.9 *Florentine* native of Florence, in modern-day central Italy, a powerful ducal city-state at the time of the play's composition

1.1.10 *remembered* rewarded

1.1.11 *borne* carried

1.1.11 *promise . . . age* i.e. what is expected of one his age

1.1.12 *figure* form; image

1.1.12 *bettered* exceeded

1.1.17 *badge* . . . *bitterness* servants wore badges to show themselves inferior to their masters; the uncle's tears show his modesty in honouring, but not sharing in, his nephew's glory

1.1.20 *kind* natural (because of their familial relationship); humane

1.1.23 *Montanto* fencing term meaning 'upthrust', variously connoting the witty banter of braggart fencers; Benedick as more braggart than soldier; sexual innuendo, both in the phallic image of the thrusting sword and the phonetic wordplay of 'mount onto'

1.1.25 *sort* (social) rank

1.1.27 *Benedick* see note to 1.1.0.2

1.1.27 *Padua* city in north-east Italy, famous for its university; compare *Taming of the Shrew* 3.1–3

1.1.28 *pleasant* good-humoured; witty (facetious)

1.1.29 *bills* advertisements

1.1.30 *flight* i.e. archery contest, though specifically 'flight' arrows were light and well-feathered to cover long distances

1.1.30 *fool* house jester; possibly Beatrice herself

1.1.30 *subscribed for* signed up in the name of

Cupid and challenged him at the bird-bolt. I pray you, how many hath he killed and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he killed? For indeed I promised to eat all of his killing.

LEONATO Faith, niece, you tax Signor Benedick too much. But he'll be meet with you, I doubt it not.

MESSENGER He hath done good service, lady, in these wars.

BEATRICE You had musty victual, and he hath holp to eat it. He is a very valiant trencherman, he hath an excellent stomach.

MESSENGER And a good soldier too, lady.

40 BEATRICE And a good soldier to a lady, but what is he to a lord?

MESSENGER A lord to a lord, a man to a man, stuffed with all honourable virtues.

BEATRICE It is so indeed, he is no less than a stuffed man, but for the stuffing—well, we are all mortal.

45 LEONATO You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signor Benedick and her. They never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them.

BEATRICE Alas, he gets nothing by that. In our last conflict, four of his five wits went halting off, and now is the whole man governed with one, so that if he have wit enough to keep himself warm, let him bear it for a difference between himself and his horse, for it is all the wealth that he hath left, to be known a reasonable creature. Who is his companion now? He hath every month a new sworn brother.

MESSENGER Is't possible?

55 BEATRICE Very easily possible: he wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat, it ever changes with the next block.

MESSENGER I see, lady, the gentleman is not in your books.

BEATRICE No. An he were, I would burn my study. But I pray you, who is his companion? Is there no young squarer now that will make a voyage with him to the devil?

60 MESSENGER He is most in the company of the right noble Claudio.

1.1.31 **bird-bolt** short, blunt-headed arrow for shooting birds, used by children (Cupid, most famously) or unskilled archers (such as the 'fool'); the meaning is cryptic, but suggests either Benedick's attempts to seem an expert wooer are being mocked, or possibly Beatrice's inexpert attempts to woo him; however, Cupid's arrows are usually depicted as weak and blunt precisely to suggest the ease with which the heart may be pierced (as at *Love's Labour's Lost* 4.3.17–18)

1.1.32 **killed . . . eaten** i.e. none at all (common send-up of those who pretend ferocity and valour); compare *Henry V* 3.7.75

1.1.34 **Faith** in faith (truly)

1.1.34 **tax** criticize

1.1.35 **meet** even (quits)

1.1.37 **musty victual** stale rations (such as soldiers at war would be forced to eat)

1.1.37 **holp** helped

1.1.38 **valiant** hearty; brave

1.1.38 **trencherman** eater (a 'trencher' was a kind of wooden plate); i.e. instead of killing (and eating) enemies, his 'service' in the war was in taking up rations

1.1.38 **stomach** appetite; courage

1.1.40 **to** compared to; faced with

1.1.43 **stuffed man** man fed full (continuing the eating theme); scarecrow; possible sexual wordplay—'stuffed' could mean both sexually penetrated and pregnant

1.1.44 **stuffing** substance (stuff of which he is made); sex

1.1.49 **five wits** faculties of the mind (common wit, imagination, fantasy, judgement, memory); five senses

1.1.49 **halting** limping

1.1.50 **wit** good sense

1.1.50 **bear** show

1.1.51 **difference** distinguishing feature (term from heraldry)

1.1.52 **reasonable** capable of reason (his only advantage over the horse)

1.1.53 **sworn brother** comrade-in-arms (mocking as superficial the military male bonding of swearing brotherly loyalty in battle)

1.1.55 **wears** shows (puts on); carries (upholds)

1.1.55 **faith** fidelity; oath of loyalty

1.1.55 **but as** merely as he does

1.1.56 **ever** constantly

1.1.56 **block** style (the mould on which the hat is made)

1.1.57 **books** good books

1.1.58 **An** if

1.1.59 **squarer** brawler

BEATRICE O Lord, he will hang upon him like a disease. He is sooner caught than the pestilence, and the taker runs presently mad. God help the noble Claudio. If he have caught the Benedick, it will cost him a thousand pound ere a be cured.

MESSENGER I will hold friends with you, lady.

BEATRICE Do, good friend.

LEONATO You will never run mad, niece.

BEATRICE No, not till a hot January.

70 MESSENGER Don Pedro is approached.

*Enter Don Pedro [the Prince], Claudio, Benedick, Balthasar and John the bastard.*

PRINCE Good Signor Leonato, are you come to meet your trouble? The fashion of the world is to avoid cost, and you encounter it.

LEONATO Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your grace; for trouble being gone, comfort should remain, but when you depart

75 from me, sorrow abides and happiness takes his leave.

PRINCE You embrace your charge too willingly. I think this is your daughter.

LEONATO Her mother hath many times told me so.

BENEDICK Were you in doubt, sir, that you asked her?

LEONATO Signor Benedick, no, for then were you a child.

80 PRINCE You have it full, Benedick. We may guess by this what you are, being a man. Truly, the lady father's herself. Be happy, lady, for you are like an honourable father.

BENEDICK If Signor Leonato be her father, she would not have his head on her shoulders for all Messina, as like him as she is.

85 BEATRICE I wonder that you will still be talking, Signor Benedick. Nobody marks you.

BENEDICK What, my dear Lady Disdain! Are you yet living?

BEATRICE Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signor Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to

90 disdain if you come in her presence.

BENEDICK Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted. And I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart, for truly I love none.

BEATRICE A dear happiness to women: they would else have been

95 troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank God and my cold blood I am

1.1.70.1–2 *Enter . . . bastard*

The Prince's party may appear for the first time in military uniforms appropriate to the historical setting of a particular performance.

1.1.70.1 JOHN Don John is sometimes portrayed as a man who literally struggles to speak, sometimes stammering in his delivery of lines. He may be visually linked to the Prince by way of costume or casting.

1.1.63 **pestilence** plague

1.1.63 **taker** victim

1.1.63 **runs** becomes (is made)

1.1.63 **presently** immediately

1.1.65 **thousand pound** i.e. a huge number of visits by the doctor (one of which would cost about 10 shillings), though the 'hang upon' may also imply that Benedick leeches money; either way, he is portrayed as very hard to get rid of

1.1.65 **ere** a before he

1.1.66 **hold** remain

1.1.68 **run mad** i.e. by catching 'the Benedick'

1.1.70 is **approached** has arrived

1.1.70.2 **bastard** Don John is an illegitimate child (see 4.1.185), thought of as naturally envious and covetous

1.1.71 **trouble** burden, i.e. guests

1.1.72 **fashion** custom

1.1.72 **cost** expense (of entertaining the Prince and his men)

1.1.72 **encounter** go towards

1.1.73 **likeness** appearance

1.1.76 **charge** expense; responsibility

1.1.79 **for . . . child** i.e. too young to seduce his wife; implies that Benedick is the only one he would suspect

1.1.80 **You . . . full** you are fully answered, i.e. there's no reply to that

1.1.80 **what . . . are** i.e. a womanizer

1.1.81 **father's herself** i.e. shows who her father is through her resemblance to him

1.1.83 **his head** i.e. because he is a white-bearded old man, though there is a possible secondary reference to cuckold's horns, which were said to grow on the heads of men with unfaithful wives

1.1.86 **marks** takes notice of

1.1.87 **yet** still

1.1.88 **meet** suitable (puns on 'meat')

1.1.92 **would** wish

1.1.94 **dear happiness** precious good fortune

1.1.94 **else** otherwise

of your humour for that. I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.

BENEDICK God keep your ladyship still in that mind! So some gentleman or other shall scape a predestinate scratched face.

100 BEATRICE Scratching could not make it worse, an 'twere such a face as yours were.

BENEDICK Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

BEATRICE A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.

BENEDICK I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good  
105 a continuer. But keep your way, o' God's name, I have done.

BEATRICE You always end with a jade's trick. I know you of old.

PRINCE That is the sum of all, Leonato. Signor Claudio and Signor Benedick, my dear friend Leonato hath invited you all. I tell him we shall stay here, at the least a month, and he heartily prays some occasion  
110 may detain us longer. I dare swear he is no hypocrite, but prays from his heart.

LEONATO If you swear, my lord, you shall not be forsworn. *[To John]* Let me bid you welcome, my lord. Being reconciled to the Prince your brother, I owe you all duty.

115 JOHN I thank you. I am not of many words, but I thank you.

LEONATO *[to Prince]* Please it your grace lead on?

PRINCE Your hand, Leonato. We will go together.

*Exeunt. Manent Benedick and Claudio*

CLAUDIO Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signor Leonato?

BENEDICK I noted her not, but I looked on her.

120 CLAUDIO Is she not a modest young lady?

BENEDICK Do you question me as an honest man should do, for my simple true judgement, or would you have me speak after my custom, as being a professed tyrant to their sex?

CLAUDIO No, I pray thee speak in sober judgement.

125 BENEDICK Why, i'faith, methinks she's too low for a high praise, too brown for a fair praise, and too little for a great praise. Only this commendation I can afford her, that were she other than she is, she were unhandsome, and being no other but as she is, I do not like her.

CLAUDIO Thou thinkest I am in sport. I pray thee tell me truly how thou  
130 likest her.

BENEDICK Would you buy her, that you enquire after her?

1.1.118 CLAUDIO Claudio is often cast as very young, in particular because of his desire to win the approval of the Prince and Benedick.

1.1.96 **humour** disposition

1.1.98 **still** always

1.1.99 **scape** escape

1.1.99 **predestinate** inescapable

1.1.100 **an 'twere** if it were

1.1.102 **rare** exceptional

1.1.102 **parrot-teacher** i.e. one who repeats themselves over and over to teach a parrot to talk

1.1.103 **A . . . yours** i.e. a talking bird is better than a dumb (mute) beast

1.1.104–5 **so . . . continuer** i.e. could go on as long

1.1.105 **keep . . . way** carry on

1.1.105 **have** am

1.1.106 **jade** worn-out horse

1.1.106 **jade's trick** refusing to budge, like an old, stubborn horse; throwing the rider, like an old crafty horse; Benedick is denying her the chance to reply by bowing out of the game

1.1.109 **occasion** matter

1.1.112 **forsworn** proved false

1.1.113 **Being** now you are

1.1.118 **note** notice; pay special attention to (Benedick picks up on this meaning); the first of many uses of this word, which had several meanings for Shakespeare's audience; see note to Title.

1.1.122 **after . . . custom** in my customary manner

1.1.123 **professed** well-known

1.1.125 **low** short

1.1.125 **high** lavish, playing on 'tall'

1.1.126 **brown** brown-haired/skinned

1.1.126 **fair** generous; flattering; of her beauty, playing on 'blonde/pale'

1.1.127 **afford** give (spare)

CLAUDIO Can the world buy such a jewel?

BENEDICK Yea, and a case to put it in, too. But speak you this with a sad brow, or do you play the flouting jack, to tell us Cupid is a good hare-finder and Vulcan a rare carpenter? Come, in what key shall a man take you to go in the song?

CLAUDIO In mine eye, she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on.

BENEDICK I can see yet without spectacles, and I see no such matter. There's her cousin, an she were not possessed with a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December. But I hope you have no intent to turn husband, have you?

CLAUDIO I would scarce trust myself, though I had sworn the contrary, if Hero would be my wife.

BENEDICK Is't come to this? In faith, hath not the world one man but he will wear his cap with suspicion? Shall I never see a bachelor of three-score again? Go to, i'faith, an thou wilt needs thrust thy neck into a yoke, wear the print of it, and sigh away Sundays. Look, Don Pedro is returned to seek you.

*Enter Don Pedro [the Prince]*

PRINCE What secret hath held you here that you followed not to Leonato's?

BENEDICK I would your grace would constrain me to tell.

PRINCE I charge thee on thy allegiance.

BENEDICK You hear, Count Claudio? I can be secret as a dumb man, I would have you think so. But on my allegiance, mark you this, on my allegiance! [*To the Prince*] He is in love. With who? Now that is your grace's part. Mark how short his answer is: with Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

CLAUDIO If this were so, so were it uttered.

BENEDICK Like the old tale, my lord—it is not so, nor 'twas not so, but indeed, God forbid it should be so.

CLAUDIO If my passion change not shortly, God forbid it should be otherwise.

1.1.133 **case** jewel-case, playing on sense of 'vagina'; 'jewel' also connoted 'virginity'

1.1.133–4 **with . . . brow** i.e. seriously

1.1.134 **flouting jack** joking rogue

1.1.134–5 **hare-finder** Cupid was blind, and so unlikely to spot a hare in a hunt.

1.1.135 **Vulcan . . . carpenter** Vulcan was the Roman god of fire, depicted as a blacksmith, therefore an unlikely woodworker

1.1.135 **rare** excellent

1.1.136 **go** join (harmonize)

1.1.138 **yet** still

1.1.139 **an** if

1.1.139 **with** by

1.1.139 **fury** Medusa-like avenging spirit in Greek mythology, i.e. a fierce temper

1.1.142 **scarce** scarcely

1.1.142 **though** even if

1.1.142 **the contrary** i.e. not to marry

1.1.144–5 **but . . . will** i.e. who will not

1.1.145 **wear . . . suspicion** be suspected of trying to conceal a cuckold's horns simply for wearing a hat (because he got married in the first place)

1.1.145–6 **three-score** sixty, i.e. one who has lived his life unmarried

1.1.146 **Go to** away with you (expression of impatience)

1.1.147 **yoke** wooden bar used to join oxen at the neck to pull ploughs etc., and symbolic of marriage; also a restraint for prisoners (Shakespeare elsewhere uses the word figuratively to mean a state of subjection)

1.1.147 **print** imprint (because it is both heavy and restrictive)

1.1.147 **sigh . . . Sundays** in dull domesticity with one's wife

1.1.151 **constrain** force

1.1.152 **charge** command

1.1.152 **allegiance** sworn loyalty (to the prince)

1.1.156 **part** i.e. his line (to ask 'with who?')

1.1.156 **Mark** note

1.1.158 **If . . . uttered** if this were true, that's how it might be told

1.1.159 **it . . . so** refers to a folk-tale in which a robber-bridegroom speaks this refrain when his crimes are finally discovered by his wife

1.1.161 **shortly** soon, but playing on the various senses of 'short' at 1.1.156

1.1.162 **otherwise** i.e. other than that he loves her

- PRINCE Amen, if you love her, for the lady is very well worthy.  
 CLAUDIO You speak this to fetch me in, my lord.  
 165 PRINCE By my troth, I speak my thought.  
 CLAUDIO And in faith, my Lord, I spoke mine.  
 BENEDICK And by my two faiths and troths, my lord, I spoke mine.  
 CLAUDIO That I love her, I feel.  
 PRINCE That she is worthy, I know.  
 170 BENEDICK That I neither feel how she should be loved nor know how she  
 should be worthy is the opinion that fire cannot melt out of me. I will  
 die in it at the stake.  
 PRINCE Thou wast ever an obstinate heretic in the despite of beauty.  
 CLAUDIO And never could maintain his part but in the force of his will.  
 175 BENEDICK That a woman conceived me, I thank her. That she brought  
 me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks. But that I will have a  
 recheat winded in my forehead, or hang my bugle in an invisible baldrick,  
 all women shall pardon me. Because I will not do them the wrong to  
 mistrust any, I will do myself the right to trust none. And the fine is  
 180 (for the which I may go the finer), I will live a bachelor.  
 PRINCE I shall see thee ere I die look pale with love.  
 BENEDICK With anger, with sickness, or with hunger, my lord; not with  
 love. Prove that ever I lose more blood with love than I will get again  
 with drinking, pick out mine eyes with a ballad-maker's pen and hang  
 185 me up at the door of a brothel house for the sign of blind Cupid.  
 PRINCE Well, if ever thou dost fall from this faith, thou wilt prove a  
 notable argument.  
 BENEDICK If I do, hang me in a bottle like a cat, and shoot at me, and he  
 that hits me, let him be clapped on the shoulder and called Adam.  
 190 PRINCE Well, as time shall try.  
 'In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke'.  
 BENEDICK The savage bull may, but if ever the sensible Benedick bear it,  
 pluck off the bull's horns, and set them in my forehead, and let me be

1.1.164 **fetch** . . . in trick me

1.1.165 **troth** truth, i.e. upon my word

1.1.167 **two** . . . **troths** i.e. because he owes loyalty to both Claudio and the Prince

1.1.173 **heretic** picks up on the image of burning at the stake in the previous line; Benedick's refusal to acknowledge women's beauty and worth is parodied as akin to a religious heretic refusing the true faith even while being tortured to death

1.1.173 **despite** scorn

1.1.174 **maintain** justify

1.1.177 **recheat** hunting horn or the call made through it; either way, another reference to a cuckold's horns

1.1.177 **winded** blown

1.1.177 **bugle** . . . **baldrick** complex pun; 'bugle' is another (cuckold's) horn reference, with secondary innuendo on 'penis'; a 'baldrick' was a shoulder belt worn across the body to carry a horn or sword, suggestive of a vagina, more so because it is 'invisible' or concealed; on one level he therefore means he has no intention of having sex, leading him to marry and end up a cuckold; on another he is recasting the image at 1.1.145 about having to conceal his cuckold's horn somehow

1.1.179 **fine** conclusion

1.1.180 **for** . . . **go** as a result of which I will be

1.1.180 **finer** better dressed (without the cost of a wife)

1.1.183 **Prove** if you prove

1.1.183–4 **lose** . . . **drinking** love melancholy was thought to draw blood away from the heart; drinking wine was thought to restore the blood flow

1.1.184 **ballad-maker's pen** many ballads were about love

1.1.184–5 **hang** . . . **Cupid** brothels, like taverns, had signs outside them; Benedick's image of himself hanging up with his eyes plucked out is a grotesque mockery of love imagery; he is also referencing the blindness caused by venereal disease, as well as suggesting that love is reducible to the activities of a brothel

1.1.185 **for** in place of

1.1.187 **argument** topic of conversation

1.1.188 **hang** . . . **cat** cats suspended in wicker baskets or 'bottles' were used as targets for archers; Benedick continues to subvert Cupid imagery (see 1.1.184–5).

1.1.189 **Adam** Adam Bell, an outlaw famed in ballads as a great archer

1.1.190 **try** tell

1.1.191 **In** . . . **yoke** proverbial (compare 1.1.146–7); in addition to the idea of a wild, horny masculine spirit being tamed, the bull's horns suggest cuckoldry

1.1.193 **pluck** . . . **forehead** another cuckold reference



vilely painted, and in such great letters as they write, 'Here is good horse  
195 to hire' let them signify under my sign, 'Here you may see Benedick,  
the married man'.

CLAUDIO If this should ever happen, thou wouldst be horn-mad.

PRINCE Nay, if Cupid have not spent all his quiver in Venice thou wilt  
quake for this shortly.

200 BENEDICK I look for an earthquake too, then.

PRINCE Well, you will temporize with the hours. In the mean time,  
good Signor Benedick, repair to Leonato's, commend me to him, and  
tell him I will not fail him at supper, for indeed he hath made great  
preparation.

205 BENEDICK I have almost matter enough in me for such an embassy.  
And so I commit you—

CLAUDIO To the tuition of God, from my house if I had it—

PRINCE The sixth of July:

Your loving friend,

210 Benedick.

BENEDICK Nay, mock not, mock not. The body of your discourse is  
sometime guarded with fragments, and the guards are but slightly  
basted on neither. Ere you flout old ends any further, examine your  
conscience. And so I leave you. *Exit*

215 CLAUDIO My liege, your highness now may do me good.

PRINCE My love is thine to teach. Teach it but how,  
And thou shalt see how apt it is to learn  
Any hard lesson that may do thee good.

CLAUDIO Hath Leonato any son, my lord?

220 PRINCE No child but Hero. She's his only heir.  
Dost thou affect her, Claudio?

CLAUDIO O, my lord,  
When you went onward on this ended action,  
I looked upon her with a soldier's eye,

1.1.216 My . . . teach Some performances emphasize a potentially homosexual relationship and closeness between the Prince and Claudio.

1.1.194–6 **vilely** . . . **man** carrying on from the imagery of the brothel sign, sideshows, attractions, or services for sale were commonly advertised using crudely painted images with descriptions in large, eye-catching lettering

1.1.197 **horn-mad** enraged, like a charging beast; cuckolding was seen as provoking similar fury in husbands

1.1.198 **spent** . . . **Venice** i.e. shot all his arrows in Venice, a city notorious for sexual licence and prostitution (the image also suggests ejaculation); the Prince, despite having played the courtly lover to Benedick's boor, is similarly reductive about love

1.1.199 **quake** i.e. under the effects of love, also playing on 'quiver'

1.1.200 **look for** await; expect

1.1.200 **earthquake** i.e. a rare event considered a portent of momentous temporal change (compare *Macbeth* 2.3.46–55); continues to play on 'quiver' and 'quake'

1.1.201 **temporize** . . . **hours** waste your time (precisely by avoiding decisions in order to stall for time); become more temperate (conform) in time; 'hours' also continues the misogynistic warp and weft of the conversation by playing on 'whores'

1.1.202 **repair** make your way

1.1.202 **commend me** convey my greetings

1.1.203 **fail him** fail to attend

1.1.205 **matter** capacity; sense

1.1.205 **embassy** envoy's message (mock formality)

1.1.206 **commit** commend—Benedick is using it as a general form

of leave-taking, though it could be a more formal commendation by prayer, which Claudio picks up on; possibly picking up on the sense of entrust with a task (as he has been)

1.1.207 **tuition** protection

1.1.207–10 **To** . . . **Benedick** they return the mock formality of his leave-taking by using conventional endings to letters; the 'sixth of July' was a quarter day when rents were paid, as well as being the old midsummer day (associated with strange behaviour)

1.1.212 **sometime** sometimes

1.1.212 **guarded with** ornamented/decked out in (tailoring metaphor)

1.1.212 **fragments** odd rags, i.e. clichés

1.1.212 **but** only

1.1.212–13 **slightly basted** loosely stitched

1.1.213 **neither** in any case

1.1.213 **Ere** before

1.1.213 **flout** mockingly recite

1.1.213 **old ends** conventional endings (of letters); worn-out sayings

1.1.215 **do** . . . **good** help me

1.1.217 **apt** ready

1.1.221 **affect** love

1.1.222 **went onward** set out

1.1.222 **action** military action



That liked, but had a rougher task in hand  
 Than to drive liking to the name of love.  
 But now I am returned, and that war-thoughts  
 Have left their places vacant, in their rooms  
 Come thronging soft and delicate desires,  
 All prompting me how fair young Hero is,  
 Saying I liked her ere I went to wars.  
 PRINCE Thou wilt be like a lover presently,  
 And tire the hearer with a book of words.  
 If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it,  
 And I will break with her, and with her father,  
 And thou shalt have her. Was't not to this end  
 That thou began'st to twist so fine a story?  
 CLAUDIO How sweetly you do minister to love,  
 That know love's grief by his complexion!  
 But lest my liking might too sudden seem,  
 I would have salved it with a longer treatise.  
 PRINCE What need the bridge much broader than the flood?  
 The fairest grant is the necessity.  
 Look what will serve is fit. 'Tis once: thou lovest,  
 And I will fit thee with the remedy.  
 I know we shall have revelling tonight.  
 I will assume thy part in some disguise,  
 And tell fair Hero I am Claudio,  
 And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart,  
 And take her hearing prisoner with the force  
 And strong encounter of my amorous tale.  
 Then after to her father will I break,  
 And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.  
 In practice let us put it presently.

*Exeunt*

## 1.2

Sc. 2 *Enter Leonato and an old man, brother to Leonato*

LEONATO How now brother, where is my cousin your son? Hath he provided this music?

BROTHER He is very busy about it. But, Brother, I can tell you strange news that you yet dreamt not of.

5 LEONATO Are they good?

1.1.225 **drive** push (convert)

1.1.226 **that** now that

1.1.227 **places** i.e. posts (military mindset)

1.1.227 **rooms** places (domestic, civilian mindset)

1.1.229 **prompting** reminding; persuading

1.1.231 **presently** before long

1.1.232 **book . . . words** lovers were associated both with prolixity and poetry about love

1.1.234 **break** broach the matter

1.1.235 **end** purpose

1.1.237 **minister to** provide for; administer (a salve)

1.1.238 **complexion** appearance

1.1.240 **salved it** accounted for

1.1.240 **treatise** narrative (explanation)

1.1.241 **flood** river

1.1.242 **grant** gift (and the granting thereof)

1.1.242 **the necessity** that which is needed

1.1.243 **Look what** whatever

1.1.243 **serve** suffice

1.1.243 **fit** suitable

1.1.243 **once** once and for all, i.e. settled

1.1.244 **fit** provide

1.1.246 **part** i.e. person

1.1.248 **in . . . bosom** i.e. to her privately

1.1.248 **unclasp** open (like a book fastened with clasps)

1.1.253 **presently** immediately

Sc. 2 1.2.1 **cousin** general term for family member or close friend (as at 1.2.21); the detail of Leonato's brother's son is treated inconsistently in the play (compare 5.1.234–5)

1.2.5 **they** i.e. the 'news' (often plural in Elizabethan usage)

BROTHER As the event stamps them. But they have a good cover, they show well outward. The Prince and Count Claudio walking in a thick-pleached alley in mine orchard, were thus much overheard by a man of mine: the Prince discovered to Claudio that he loved my niece,  
10 your daughter, and meant to acknowledge it this night in a dance, and if he found her accordant, he meant to take the present time by the top, and instantly break with you of it.

LEONATO Hath the fellow any wit that told you this?

BROTHER A good sharp fellow. I will send for him, and question him  
15 yourself.

LEONATO No, no. We will hold it as a dream till it appear itself. But I will acquaint my daughter withal, that she may be the better prepared for an answer if peradventure this be true.

[Enter attendant]

Go you and tell her of it. [Exit attendant] Cousins, you know what you  
20 have to do. O, I cry you mercy, friend. Go you with me and I will use your skill. Good cousin, have a care this busy time. Exeunt

1.3  
Sc. 3 Enter John the bastard, and Conrad, his companion

CONRAD What the goodyear, my lord, why are you thus out of measure sad?

JOHN There is no measure in the occasion that breeds it, therefore the sadness is without limit.

5 CONRAD You should hear reason.

JOHN And when I have heard it, what blessing brings it?

CONRAD If not a present remedy, at least a patient sufferance.

JOHN I wonder that thou (being as thou sayest, thou art, born under Saturn) goest about to apply a moral medicine, to a mortifying  
10 mischief. I cannot hide what I am. I must be sad when I have cause; and smile at no man's jests; eat when I have stomach, and wait for no man's leisure; sleep when I am drowsy, and tend on no man's business; laugh when I am merry, and claw no man in his humour.

CONRAD Yea but you must not make the full show of this till you  
15 may do it without controlment. You have of late stood out against

Sc. 2 1.2.7–12 The Prince ... it Some productions insert a version of this scene, with both Borachio and Leonato's brother's men listening in on the Prince and Claudio.

Sc. 3 1.3.3 JOHN John is sometimes portrayed as being in love with Hero or as a repressed gay man.

1.2.6 event outcome  
1.2.6 stamps authenticates (will determine), like an official stamp of approval; also plays on the sense of printing, which is continued in the book imagery of 'cover'  
1.2.7 show ... outward look good on the outside  
1.2.8 thick-pleached thickly hedged  
1.2.9 man servant  
1.2.9 discovered revealed  
1.2.11 accordant willing  
1.2.11 present time opportunity  
1.2.11 top topknot/forelock; proverbial, as the goddess Fortuna was depicted as being bald at the back of her head  
1.2.12 break speak (broach)  
1.2.13 wit sense  
1.2.16 hold think of  
1.2.16 appear manifest  
1.2.17 withal with it  
1.2.18 peradventure perhaps  
1.2.20 cry ... mercy beg you pardon

Sc. 3 1.3.1 What ... goodyear mild exclamation, similar to 'what the hell?' or 'what the devil?'  
1.3.1 out ... measure excessively  
1.3.2 sad gloomy (embittered)  
1.3.3 measure limit  
1.3.3 occasion source; circumstance  
1.3.3 breeds causes (the sadness)  
1.3.7 sufferance endurance  
1.3.8 wonder marvel  
1.3.9 Saturn thought to govern the melancholic humour; those born under its influence were considered naturally morose (saturnine)  
1.3.9 goest about take pains (try)  
1.3.9–10 mortifying mischief fatal disease; killing misfortune  
1.3.11 stomach appetite  
1.3.12 leisure i.e. availability to eat with him  
1.3.13 claw soothe; flatter  
1.3.13 humour ill humour (bad mood)  
1.3.15 controlment check (restraint)  
1.3.15 of late lately

your brother, and he hath ta'en you newly into his grace, where it is impossible you should take true root but by the fair weather that you make yourself. It is needful that you frame the season for your own harvest.

20 JOHN I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace, and it better fits my blood to be disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob love from any. In this (though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man) it must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain, I am trusted with a muzzle, and enfranchised with a clog. Therefore I have  
25 decreed, not to sing in my cage. If I had my mouth I would bite. If I had my liberty I would do my liking. In the mean time, let me be that I am, and seek not to alter me.

CONRAD Can you make no use of your discontent?

JOHN I make all use of it, for I use it only. Who comes here?

[Enter Borachio]

30 What news Borachio?

BORACHIO I came yonder from a great supper. The Prince your brother is royally entertained by Leonato, and I can give you intelligence of an intended marriage.

1.3.31 BORACHIO True to his name, he often has a red face and carries a flask, which he may drink from liberally.

JOHN Will it serve for any model to build mischief on? What is he for a  
35 fool that betroths himself to unquietness?

BORACHIO Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

JOHN Who, the most exquisite Claudio?

BORACHIO Even he.

JOHN A proper squire. And who, and who? Which way looks he?

40 BORACHIO Marry, on Hero, the daughter and heir of Leonato.

JOHN A very forward March chick. How came you to this?

BORACHIO Being entertained for a perfumer, as I was smoking a musty room comes me the Prince and Claudio hand in hand, in sad conference. I whipped me behind the arras, and there heard it agreed upon, that the  
45 Prince should woo Hero for himself and, having obtained her, give her to Count Claudio.

1.3.16 **newly** very recently; once more

1.3.16 **grace** forgiveness; favour

1.3.17 **fair weather** i.e. opportunities (through good behaviour)

1.3.18 **frame** make (shape)

1.3.18–19 **frame . . . harvest** i.e. create the circumstances to bring about any rewards you might gain

1.3.20 **canker** canker-roses or dog-roses are wild, implying unwanted, intrusive growth (like Don John's bastardy) that is nonetheless hardy and tenacious (plays also on 'cancer' or 'disease')

1.3.21 **fits** suits

1.3.21 **blood** mood; disposition

1.3.21 **of** by

1.3.21 **fashion** shape, i.e. pretend

1.3.21 **carriage** attitude (behaviour)

1.3.22 **rob** i.e. falsely get

1.3.23 **but** that

1.3.24 **enfranchised** set free

1.3.24 **clog** heavy block attached to the leg to prevent escape

1.3.25 **decreed** decided

1.3.29 **it only** i.e. it and it alone

1.3.29.1 *Borachio* from *borracho*, Spanish for 'drunkard'

1.3.32 **intelligence** news

1.3.34 **model** ground-plan (blueprint), i.e. basis

1.3.34–5 **What . . . fool** what kind of a fool is he

1.3.35 **betroths** engages (commits)

1.3.35 **unquietness** i.e. the nagging or arguing that attends marriage

1.3.36 **Marry** by (the Virgin) Mary—a common oath but here also an apt pun on the topic of conversation

1.3.39 **proper** complete; fine

1.3.39 **squire** chivalric young lover

1.3.41 **forward March chick** literally an early hatchling; probably means Claudio in the sense of 'precocious youth', though could also mean Hero in the sense of 'early-maturing' or even 'immodest young thing'; in both cases the tone is mocking

1.3.42 **entertained for** employed as

1.3.42 **perfumer** one who fumigates rooms by burning aromatic herbs, masking the bad odours typical of homes in the period (as in preparation for guests)

1.3.43 **me** towards me (ethical dative)

1.3.43 **sad** serious

1.3.44 **whipped me** i.e. quickly hid myself

1.3.44 **arras** wall-hanging tapestry

JOHN Come, come, let us thither, this may prove food to my displeasure.  
That young start-up hath all the glory of my overthrow. If I can cross  
him any way, I bless myself every way. You are both sure, and will  
50 assist me?  
CONRAD To the death, my Lord.  
JOHN Let us to the great supper, their cheer is the greater that I am  
subdued. Would the cook were o' my mind. Shall we go prove what's to  
be done?  
55 BORACHIO We'll wait upon your lordship. *Exit*

## 2.1

Sc. 4 *Enter Leonato, his brother, his wife, Hero his daughter, Beatrice his niece,  
and a kinsman, [Margaret, and Ursula]*

LEONATO Was not Count John here at supper?  
BROTHER I saw him not.  
BEATRICE How tartly that gentleman looks. I never can see him but I  
am heartburned an hour after.  
5 HERO He is of a very melancholy disposition.  
BEATRICE He were an excellent man that were made just in the midway  
between him and Benedick. The one is too like an image and says  
nothing, and the other too like my lady's eldest son, evermore tattling.  
LEONATO Then half Signor Benedick's tongue in Count John's mouth,  
10 and half Count John's melancholy in Signor Benedick's face—  
BEATRICE With a good leg and a good foot, uncle, and money enough  
in his purse—such a man would win any woman in the world if a could  
get her good will.  
LEONATO By my troth, niece, thou wilt never get thee a husband, if thou  
15 be so shrewd of thy tongue.  
BROTHER In faith she's too curst.  
BEATRICE Too curst is more than curst. I shall lessen God's sending  
that way, for it is said, God sends a curst cow short horns, but to a cow  
too curst, he sends none.  
20 LEONATO So, by being too curst, God will send you no horns.  
BEATRICE Just, if he send me no husband, for the which blessing, I am  
at him upon my knees every morning and evening. Lord, I could not  
endure a husband with a beard on his face, I had rather lie in the woollen!  
LEONATO You may light on a husband that hath no beard.

## Sc. 4 2.1.0.2 a kinsman

Another 'ghost' character, not mentioned again and seldom seen in performance.

2.1.0.2 Margaret and Ursula Margaret and Ursula may enter here with Leonato's party, or with the masquers at 2.1.60–1. Neither character is required until 2.1.72.

1.3.48 **start-up** upstart

1.3.48 **cross** thwart (with play on 'bless')

1.3.49 **sure** loyal (steadfast)

1.3.53 **subdued** downcast; conquered

1.3.53 **o' . . . mind** i.e. having poisonous thoughts

1.3.53 **prove** try out

Sc. 4 2.1.3 **tartly** bitterly

2.1.4 **heartburned** i.e. from the sourness of his looks (indigestion)

2.1.4 **an hour** for an hour

2.1.7 **image** statue

2.1.8 **my . . . son** a widow's eldest son or a noble family's eldest son;  
in either case, a spoilt child

2.1.11 **good . . . foot** i.e. a nice body (shapely limbs)

2.1.15 **shrewd** sharp (shrewish)

2.1.16 **curst** bad-tempered

2.1.18 **God . . . horns** i.e. if an angry cow gets short horns a very angry one gets none (God curbing the destructiveness of the aggressive was proverbial); figuratively, 'horns' again refers to cuckoldry, a cause of anger (compare note to 1.1.197), and 'curst' also probably plays on the sense of 'ill-fated', i.e. Beatrice's temperament will keep her free of the curse of marriage and of being cuckolded

2.1.23 **beard . . . face** the ability to grow a beard was variously a sign of manliness, virility, and maturity (compare 2.1.25–9 and 5.1.172), though 'lie in the woollen' means sleep in coarse woollen blankets, making the beard, and therefore the husband, no more than a cause of itchiness and irritation; notably Benedick later shaves (3.2.32–5) though here the image seems more suggestive of her lack of interest in any man

2.1.24 **light on** alight (fall) upon, i.e. find yourself choosing

25 BEATRICE What should I do with him, dress him in my apparel and make him my waiting gentlewoman? He that hath a beard, is more then a youth: and he that hath no beard, is less than a man; and he that is more than a youth, is not for me, and he that is less then a man, I am not for him. Therefore I will even take sixpence in earnest of the bearward, and lead his apes into hell.

LEONATO Well then, go you into hell?

BEATRICE No, but to the gate, and there will the devil meet me like an old cuckold with horns on his head, and say, 'Get you to heaven, Beatrice, get you to heaven. Here's no place for you maids.' So deliver I up my apes and away to Saint Peter 'fore the heavens, he shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry as the day is long.

BROTHER [*to Hero*] Well, niece, I trust you will be ruled by your father.

BEATRICE Yes, faith, it is my cousin's duty to make curtsy and say, 'Father, as it please you.' But yet for all that, cousin, let him be a handsome fellow, or else make an other curtsy, and say, 'Father, as it please me.'

40 LEONATO [*to Beatrice*] Well, niece, I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband.

BEATRICE Not 'til God make men of some other mettle than earth. Would it not grieve a woman to be overmastered with a piece of valiant dust?—to make an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl? No, uncle, I'll none. Adam's sons are my brethren, and truly I hold it a sin to match in my kindred.

LEONATO Daughter, remember what I told you, if the Prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer.

50 BEATRICE The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you be not wooed in good time. If the Prince be too important, tell him there is measure in everything, and so dance out the answer. For hear me, Hero, wooing, wedding, and repenting is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinquepace. The first suit is hot and hasty like a Scotch jig (and full as fantastical); the wedding mannerly modest (as a measure), full of state and ancients. 55 And then comes repentance, and with his bad legs falls into the cinquepace faster and faster, 'til he sink into his grave.

2.1.25 **apparel** clothing

2.1.29 **earnest** advance payment

2.1.29 **of** from

2.1.29 **bearward** keeper of bears (for bear-baiting) and other animals, probably including apes

2.1.30 **lead . . . hell** proverbially, the fate of spinsters, though why is unclear; perhaps punishment for avoiding having children during earthly life.

2.1.34 **maids** virgins

2.1.36 **bachelors** unmarried people (of either sex)

2.1.41 **fitted** matched; fitted out (provided); 'with' could also mean 'by', a conversion which supplies a secondary sexual innuendo

2.1.43 **mettle** material; character

2.1.43 **earth** from which man is made in the Christian creation myth (woman is made from one of Adam's ribs)

2.1.44 **with** by

2.1.45 **wayward** errant (because fallen, continuing the creation reference); erratic; antagonistic

2.1.45 **marl** clay (soil)

2.1.47 **match . . . kindred** the Book of Common Prayer forbade marriage among blood relations

2.1.49 **in . . . kind** on that matter, i.e. propose marriage

2.1.50–1 **in . . . time** at the right moment, punning on 'time' as musical tempo

2.1.51 **important** importunate (urgent)

2.1.51 **measure** moderation, punning on the slow, stately dance known as a 'measure'; 'measure in everything' was proverbial

2.1.52 **answer** i.e. to his question, punning on 'answer' as musical response

2.1.53 **Scotch jig** known as a particularly lively dance

2.1.53 **cinquepace** five-step dance, involving a leap at the end of each measure, therefore tiring; pronounced 'sink-a-pace', leading to Beatrice's 'sink' at 2.1.57, punning both on the word's sound and the idea of worn-out dancers

2.1.54 **suit** courtship (of a suitor)

2.1.54 **hot** passionate

2.1.54 **full** just

2.1.54 **fantastical** extravagant

2.1.55 **state** stateliness

2.1.55 **ancientry** tradition

2.1.56 **bad legs** because old (and tired)

LEONATO Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

BEATRICE I have a good eye uncle, I can see a church by daylight.

60 LEONATO [*to Antonio*] The revellers are entering, brother. Make good room.

*Enter Prince [Don] Pedro, Claudio, and Benedick, and Balthasar, [and] dumb John, [Borachio]*

PRINCE [*to Hero*] Lady, will you walk a bout with your friend?

HERO So you walk softly, and look sweetly, and say nothing, I am yours for the walk; and especially when I walk away.

65 PRINCE With me in your company?

HERO I may say so when I please.

PRINCE And when please you to say so?

HERO When I like your favour; for God defend the lute should be like the case.

70 PRINCE My visor is Philemon's roof. Within the house is Jove.

HERO Why then your visor should be thatched.

PRINCE Speak low if you speak love.

*[They move aside]*

BENEDICK [*to Margaret*] Well, I would you did like me.

MARGARET So would not I, for your own sake, for I have many ill qualities.

75 BENEDICK Which is one?

MARGARET I say my prayers aloud.

BENEDICK I love you the better—the hearers may cry amen.

MARGARET God match me with a good dancer.

BALTHASAR Amen.

80 MARGARET And God keep him out of my sight when the dance is done. Answer, clerk.

BALTHASAR No more words. The clerk is answered.

*[They move aside]*

URSULA [*to Antonio*] I know you well enough, you are Signor Antonio.

BROTHER At a word, I am not.

85 URSULA I know you by the wagging of your head.

BROTHER To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

URSULA You could never do him so ill-well, unless you were the very man. Here's his dry hand up and down. You are he, you are he.

BROTHER At a word, I am not.

2.1.58 **apprehend** grasp the matter; perceive; interpret

2.1.58 **passing** extremely (surpassing)

2.1.58 **shrewdly** wisely; sharply (harshly)

2.1.59 **church** . . . **daylight** i.e. what's plain and obvious (a church being the most conspicuous building in a town)

2.1.62 **bout** turn (of the dance)

2.1.62 **friend** friend; partner; lover

2.1.63 **So** so long as

2.1.68 **favour** face (looks)

2.1.68 **defend** forbid

2.1.69 **case** i.e. the mask or 'visor' Don Pedro is wearing

2.1.70 **Philemon's** . . . **Jove** Jove, king of the gods, was given kind hospitality by the elderly peasant, Philemon, while disguised as a poor traveller (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8)

2.1.71 **thatched** perhaps suggests the mask is ornate and should be more humble, like Philemon's cottage, or that Don Pedro is bald; in either case, a wry put-down to his egotism (may also simply

mean the mask lacks hair, though such banality seems out of keeping with the wit of the exchange)

2.1.78 **dancer** Margaret is likely to be playing on the sexual connotations of dancing here, meaning she wants a good lover who will leave her alone at all other times; compare 3.4.33

2.1.81 **Answer** i.e. say 'amen'

2.1.81 **clerk** i.e. parish clerk, leader of the responses in a church service; Balthasar realizes he has been rejected and does not bother to respond

2.1.184 **At** in

2.1.85 **wagging** trembling (a sign of old age, like the 'dry hand')

2.1.86 **counterfeit** imitate

2.1.87 **do** perform

2.1.87 **ill-well** cruelly accurately

2.1.88 **dry** shrivelled

2.1.88 **up** . . . **down** to a tee

2.1.60 **The** . . . **entering** The 1623 text adds drummers to precede the entrance of the revellers.

2.1.61.1–2 **Enter** . . .

**Borachio**. At least the men must be masked, but most modern performances mask everyone, and the party is often represented as a high visual spectacle. Each character's mask may say something about them.

Leonato may stay unmasked to greet his guests, and John sometimes abstains from partying.

2.1.72, 75, 77 **BENEDICK**

Most productions (and editions) give these three speeches to Balthasar or Borachio. An exchange between Margaret and Borachio foreshadows later events. Both options stop Benedick from a potential romance with anyone other than Beatrice.

90 URSULA Come, come, do you think I do not know you by your excellent wit? Can virtue hide itself? Go to, mum, you are he. Graces will appear, and there's an end.

*[They move aside]*

BEATRICE *[to Benedick]* Will you not tell me who told you so?

BENEDICK No, you shall pardon me.

95 BEATRICE Nor will you not tell me who you are?

BENEDICK Not now.

BEATRICE That I was disdainful, and that I had my good wit out of the Hundred Merry Tales—well, this was Signor Benedick that said so.

BENEDICK What's he?

100 BEATRICE I am sure you know him well enough.

BENEDICK Not I, believe me.

BEATRICE Did he never make you laugh?

BENEDICK I pray you, what is he?

BEATRICE Why he is the Prince's jester, a very dull fool. Only his gift is  
105 in devising impossible slanders. None but libertines delight in him, and the commendation is not in his wit, but in his villainy, for he both pleases men and angers them, and then they laugh at him, and beat him. I am sure he is in the fleet. I would he had boarded me.

BENEDICK When I know the gentleman, I'll tell him what you say.

110 BEATRICE Do, do. He'll but break a comparison or two on me, which peradventure (not marked, or not laughed at), strikes him into melancholy, and then there's a partridge wing saved, for the fool will eat no supper that night.

*[Music for the dance]*

We must follow the leaders.

115 BENEDICK In every good thing.

BEATRICE Nay, if they lead to any ill, I will leave them at the next turning.

*Dance*

*Exeunt [all but John, Borachio, and Claudio]*

JOHN *[aside to Borachio]* Sure my brother is amorous on Hero, and hath withdrawn her father to break with him about it. The ladies follow her,  
120 and but one visor remains.

BORACHIO *[aside to John]* And that is Claudio, I know him by his bearing.

JOHN *[to Claudio]* Are not you Signor Benedick?

CLAUDIO You know me well, I am he.

2.1.93 Will . . . so? Beatrice may drop her mask to make her identity known.

2.1.117.1 *Dance*  
Performances have included dances of every imaginable style including swing dancing, ballroom, Bharatanatyam dance, and traditional Elizabethan dances.

2.1.123 JOHN John may be obviously slouching or otherwise making clear his disdain for Claudio and the celebratory atmosphere.

2.1.91 *mum* hush

2.1.91 *Graces* attractive qualities; virtues

2.1.91 *appear* show themselves

2.1.92 *there's . . . end* that's the end of it

2.1.98 *Hundred . . . Tales* a popular collection of crude comic tales

2.1.104 *Only his* his only

2.1.105 *impossible* i.e. to believe (ridiculous)

2.1.105 *libertines* sensualists (lechers and drinkers)

2.1.106 *in his wit* i.e. found in his wit

2.1.106 *wit* wisdom; humour

2.1.106 *villainy sharp slanders* (as opposed to generous wit); coarseness

2.1.106–7 *pleases . . . angers* i.e. amuses the hearers of his slanders, and angers the objects of them

2.1.108 *in . . . fleet* among the group (of dancers)

2.1.108 *boarded* taken on (with his wit), playing on sexual sense

2.1.110 *break* speak, with the added sense of a lance broken in a joust, i.e. his low wit will have little effect

2.1.110 *comparison* insulting simile or allusion

2.1.111 *marked* noted

2.1.112 *partridge wing* a delicacy, though notable for having very little meat on it, i.e. melancholy will rob him of his appetite

2.1.114 *leaders* first couple in the dance

2.1.116 *ill* harm

2.1.117 *turning* i.e. change in the dance (of direction or partner), playing on the sense of turning off a road

2.1.119 *withdrawn* taken aside

2.1.119 *break* speak (broach)

2.1.120 *visor* mask



125 JOHN Signor, you are very near my brother in his love. He is enamoured  
on Hero. I pray you dissuade him from her. She is no equal for his birth.  
You may do the part of an honest man in it.

CLAUDIO How know you he loves her?

JOHN I heard him swear his affection.

130 BORACHIO So did I, too, and he swore he would marry her tonight.

JOHN Come, let us to the banquet. *Exeunt Manet Claudio*

CLAUDIO Thus answer I in name of Benedick,

But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.

'Tis certain so, the Prince woos for himself.

135 Friendship is constant in all other things

Save in the office and affairs of love.

Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues.

Let every eye negotiate for itself,

And trust no agent: for beauty is a witch

140 Against whose charms faith melteth into blood.

This is an accident of hourly proof,

Which I mistrusted not. Farewell, therefore, Hero.

*Enter Benedick*

BENEDICK Count Claudio?

CLAUDIO Yea, the same.

145 BENEDICK Come, will you go with me?

CLAUDIO Whither?

BENEDICK Even to the next willow, about your own business, County.

What fashion will you wear the garland of? About your neck, like an  
user's chain? Or under your arm, like a lieutenant's scarf? You must

150 wear it one way, for the Prince hath got your Hero.

CLAUDIO I wish him joy of her.

BENEDICK Why that's spoken like an honest drover; so they sell bullock.

But did you think the Prince would have served you thus?

CLAUDIO I pray you leave me.

155 BENEDICK Ho, now you strike like the blind man—'twas the boy that  
stole your meat, and you'll beat the post.

CLAUDIO If it will not be, I'll leave you. *Exit*

BENEDICK Alas poor hurt fowl, now will he creep into sedges. But that  
my Lady Beatrice should know me, and not know me! The Prince's fool!

160 Ha! It may be I go under that title because I am merry. Yea, but so I  
am apt to do myself wrong. I am not so reputed. It is the base (though

2.1.125 **near** . . . love close to my brother; loved by my brother

2.1.126 **birth** noble birth (royalty)

2.1.127 **part** service

2.1.127 **honest** loyal

2.1.131 **banquet** course of wine, fruit, and sweets served after the  
dance

2.1.133 ill bad

2.1.136 **Save** except

2.1.136 **office** business

2.1.140 **faith** loyalty

2.1.140 **blood** passion (desire)

2.1.141 **accident** occurrence

2.1.141 **hourly** i.e. common (happens every hour)

2.1.141 **proof** testimony, i.e. experience shows how common this is

2.1.142 **mistrusted** suspected

2.1.147 **willow** willow trees (and garlands made from them) were  
emblematic of forsaken love; Benedick jokes about the Prince

having 'got' Hero for himself, unaware of what has just passed  
between Claudio and Don John

2.1.147 **County** Count

2.1.148 **fashion** manner; style

2.1.149 **usurer's chain** large gold chain worn by rich moneylenders  
2.1.149 **scarf** sash or shoulder band; again, the idea is of overtly  
displaying status or profession

2.1.152 **drover** cattle-dealer

2.1.152 **so** that's how

2.1.155 **strike** . . . **man** i.e. lash out blindly in anger

2.1.155–6 **boy** . . . **meat** Benedick continues to goad Claudio about  
the Prince and Hero, perhaps as a mock for his lack of trust  
(compare 2.1.152)

2.1.156 **post** pillar; messenger (Benedick)

2.1.158 **sedges** rushes (in which an injured bird might hide)

2.1.160 **so** i.e. by thinking that

2.1.161 **base** low (crude)

bitter) disposition of Beatrice, that puts the world into her person, and so gives me out. Well, I'll be revenged as I may.

*[Enter the Prince]*

PRINCE Now, Signor, where's the Count? Did you see him?

165 BENEDICK Troth, my lord, I have played the part of Lady Fame. I found him here as melancholy as a lodge in a warren, I told him, and I think I told him true, that your grace had got the goodwill of this young lady, and I offered him my company to a willow tree, either to make him a garland, as being forsaken, or to bind him up a rod, as being worthy  
170 to be whipped.

PRINCE To be whipped, what's his fault?

BENEDICK The flat transgression of a schoolboy, who, being overjoyed with finding a bird's nest, shows it his companion, and he steals it.

PRINCE Wilt thou make a trust a transgression? The transgression is in  
175 the stealer.

BENEDICK Yet it had not been amiss the rod had been made, and the garland too, for the garland he might have worn himself, and the rod he might have bestowed on you, who (as I take it) have stolen his bird's nest.

PRINCE I will but teach them to sing, and restore them to the owner.

180 BENEDICK If their singing answer your saying, by my faith you say honestly.

PRINCE The Lady Beatrice hath a quarrel to you. The gentleman that danced with her, told her she is much wronged by you.

BENEDICK O, she misused me past the endurance of a block. An oak but  
185 with one green leaf on it would have answered her. My very visor began to assume life and scold with her. She told me—not thinking I had been myself—that I was the Prince's jester, that I was duller than a great thaw, huddling jest upon jest, with such impossible conveyance upon me that I stood like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting  
190 at me. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs. If her breath were as terrible as her terminations, there were no living near her, she would infect to the North Star. I would not marry her though she were endowed with all that Adam had left him before he transgressed. She would have made Hercules have turned spit, yea, and have cleft his club

2.1.163 I'll . . . may Leonato and Hero may enter as early as here, though neither speaks until 2.1.257 and some productions avoid potential overcrowding on stage. Other productions emphasize the celebratory setting, allowing two extra bodies on stage to blend into the crowd.

2.1.185 BENEDICK Benedick may be bitter or amused. He may increase speed as his complaints get more and more dramatic.

2.1.162 puts . . . person presents her view as the world's  
2.1.163 so . . . out presents me in that way  
2.1.165 Lady Fame i.e. a gossip ('fame' meaning rumour)  
2.1.166 lodge hunting lodge (cabin)  
2.1.166 warren large park used for breeding small game (the 'lodge' would be isolated and lonely, and eating hare's meat was also thought to induce melancholy)  
2.1.169 bind . . . up i.e. bind together  
2.1.169 rod bundle of twigs used to beat errant children  
2.1.172 flat downright; basic  
2.1.172 transgression error (i.e. a schoolboy error)  
2.1.174 transgression error; sin  
2.1.180 answer corroborate (confirm)  
2.1.182 to with  
2.1.184 misused abused  
2.1.184 block e.g. of wood (an unfeeling object)  
2.1.184–5 oak . . . leaf 'oak' pushes the 'block' image to the extreme, 'one green leaf' meaning barely alive  
2.1.185 answered i.e. argued back

2.1.187–8 duller . . . thaw meltwater in spring made roads impassably muddy, keeping people stuck, and bored, at home  
2.1.188 huddling piling up  
2.1.188 impossible conveyance incredible skill  
2.1.189 mark target  
2.1.190 poniards daggers  
2.1.191 terminations terms (expression)  
2.1.192–3 she . . . with brought with her as a dowry  
2.1.193 all . . . transgressed i.e. the Garden of Eden, which was Adam's to enjoy before the Fall  
2.1.194 Hercules . . . spit Omphale, Queen of Lydia, made Hercules dress as a woman and spin wool; Benedick suggests Beatrice could do worse (turning a spit was the lowliest kitchen duty, usually given to a serving boy)  
2.1.194 cleft split (into firewood), giving up his manhood just to get away from her; the destruction of the phallic club is a symbolic emasculation as well as the more surface image of his warrior's weapon literally fuelling his willing domestic servitude

195 to make the fire, too. Come, talk not of her, you shall find her the infernal  
Ate in good apparel. I would to God some scholar would conjure her,  
for certainly, while she is here, a man may live as quiet in hell as in  
a sanctuary, and people sin upon purpose because they would go  
thither, so indeed all disquiet, horror, and perturbation follows her.

*Enter Claudio and Beatrice [and Leonato with Hero]*

200 PRINCE Look, here she comes.

BENEDICK Will your grace command me any service to the world's end?  
I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes that you can  
devise to send me on. I will fetch you a tooth-picker now from the  
furthest inch of Asia, bring you the length of Prester John's foot, fetch  
205 you a hair off the Great Cham's beard, do you any embassy to the  
pygmies, rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy. You  
have no employment for me?

PRINCE None but to desire your good company.

BENEDICK O God, sir, here's a dish I love not, I cannot endure my Lady  
210 Tongue. *Exit*

PRINCE Come, lady, come, you have lost the heart of Signor Benedick.

BEATRICE Indeed, my Lord, he lent it me awhile, and I gave him use for  
it, a double heart for his single one. Marry, once before he won it of me,  
with false dice. Therefore your grace may well say I have lost it.

215 PRINCE You have put him down, lady, you have put him down.

BEATRICE So I would not he should do me, my Lord, lest I should prove  
the mother of fools. I have brought Count Claudio, whom you sent me  
to seek.

PRINCE Why, how now, Count, wherefore are you sad?

220 CLAUDIO Not sad, my lord.

PRINCE How then? Sick?

CLAUDIO Neither, my lord.

BEATRICE The Count is neither sad, nor sick, nor merry, nor well, but  
civil count, civil as an orange, and something of that jealous complexion.

225 PRINCE I'faith lady, I think your blazon to be true, though I'll be sworn,  
if he be so, his conceit is false. Here, Claudio, I have wooed in thy name,

2.1.213 **Indeed** . . . it Some productions, highlighting the earlier love affair between Beatrice and Benedick, emphasize Beatrice's anger and lingering emotional pain in this speech.

2.1.196 **Ate** . . . **apparel** Ate, daughter of Zeus, goddess of discord and vengeance, was beautiful but usually wore only rags, i.e. Beatrice's nice clothes are the only difference

2.1.196 **scholar** Latin, the language of scholarship, was needed to perform exorcisms of evil spirits

2.1.196 **conjure** exorcise

2.1.197 **here** i.e. on earth

2.1.198 **sanctuary** religious refuge

2.1.199 **thither** i.e. to hell

2.1.202 **Antipodes** i.e. the other side of the world

2.1.203 **tooth-picker** toothpick (a worthless item)

2.1.204 **Prester John** a figure of legend in the medieval period, said to be a Christian ruler of a rich kingdom in the Far East; finding him would be impossible, and finding the length of his foot pointless

2.1.205 **Great Cham** the title of the Mongol emperors, the Khans (Kublai, Genghis, etc.); Benedick conjures another extremely lengthy, dangerous, and pointless errand

2.1.205 **embassage** mission; message

2.1.206 **pygmies** a legendary race of tiny people from travellers' tales

2.1.206 **harpy** mythical rapacious creatures with birds' bodies and beautiful women's faces, thought to act as ministers of divine vengeance

2.1.212 **use** interest (on a loan, as in 'usury')

2.1.213 **it** i.e. either his own heart back or her heart, though the image of the double heart suggests both at once (and that she was more loving than he was)

2.1.213 **of** from

2.1.214 **false dice** dice weighted to cheat the odds, i.e. false promises

2.1.215 **put** . . . **down** i.e. defeated or humiliated him, though Beatrice's response puns on sex, compounded by the use of 'do'

2.1.219 **wherefore** why

2.1.224 **civil** i.e. neither sad nor merry, with pun on 'Seville', Spanish city famed for oranges (a fruit considered bittersweet because of the sour rind and sweet flesh)

2.1.224 **jealous complexion** yellow was the jealous colour (possibly linked to the idea of jaundice as symptomatic of wasting melancholy)

2.1.225 **blazon** description

2.1.226 **conceit** thought

and fair Hero is won. I have broke with her father, and his good will obtained. Name the day of marriage, and God give thee joy.

LEONATO Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes.

230 His grace hath made the match, and all grace say amen to it.

BEATRICE Speak, Count, 'tis your cue.

CLAUDIO Silence is the perfectest herald of joy. I were but little happy if I could say, how much. *[To Hero]* Lady, as you are mine, I am yours, I give away myself for you, and dote upon the exchange.

235 BEATRICE Speak, cousin, or, if you cannot, stop his mouth with a kiss, and let not him speak neither.

PRINCE In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

BEATRICE Yea, my lord, I thank it. Poor fool, it keeps on the windy side of care. My cousin tells him in his ear that he is in her heart.

240 CLAUDIO And so she doth, cousin.

BEATRICE Good Lord, for alliance! Thus goes every one to the world but I, and I am sunburnt. I may sit in a corner and cry, 'Heigh-ho for a husband'.

PRINCE Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

245 BEATRICE I would rather have one of your father's getting. Hath your grace ne'er a brother like you? Your father got excellent husbands if a maid could come by them.

PRINCE Will you have me, lady?

250 BEATRICE No, my lord, unless I might have another for working days, your grace is too costly to wear every day. But I beseech your grace pardon me, I was born to speak all mirth, and no matter.

PRINCE Your silence most offends me, and to be merry, best becomes you; for out o' question, you were born in a merry hour.

255 BEATRICE No, sure, my lord, my mother cried. But then there was a star danced, and under that was I born. *[To Hero and Claudio]* Cousins, God give you joy.

LEONATO Niece, will you look to those things I told you of?

BEATRICE I cry you mercy, uncle. *[To Prince]* By your grace's pardon.

*Exit Beatrice*

PRINCE By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

260 LEONATO There's little of the melancholy element in her, my lord. She is never sad but when she sleeps, and not ever sad then; for I have heard my daughter say, she hath often dreamt of unhappiness, and waked herself with laughing.

PRINCE She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband.

265 LEONATO O, by no means. She mocks all her wooers out of suit.

2.1.249 Will . . . lady? The Prince may be sincere, joking, or even tipsy in his proposal to Beatrice.

2.1.227 **good will** blessing

2.1.230 **all grace** i.e. God

2.1.232 **herald** message-bearer (announcer)

2.1.238–9 **windy** . . . **care** upwind of sorrows and troubles (thus not scented out and pursued by them)

2.1.241 **alliance** marriage

2.1.241 **goes** . . . **world** everyone gets married (the way of the world)

2.1.242 **sunburnt** i.e. undesirable (dark skin was considered unattractive)

2.1.242–3 **cry** . . . **husband** i.e. go whistle for one; a proverbial lament, also the title of a ballad claiming any husband is better than none, an attitude that Beatrice mocks

2.1.245 **getting** conception (plays on 'get' as obtain in previous line)

2.1.246 **got** begot

2.1.250 **costly** i.e. high-born

2.1.251 **matter** substance

2.1.252 **becomes** suits

2.1.253 **out o'** without

2.1.254 **cried** in labour

2.1.258 **cry** . . . **mercy** beg your pardon

2.1.260 **element** substance (black bile, one of the four bodily humours, thought to cause melancholy); Beatrice's temperament is seen as influenced by the 'star' under which she was born; compare 1.3.8–9

2.1.261 **sad** unhappy; serious

2.1.261 **ever** always

2.1.265 **suit** courtship

PRINCE She were an excellent wife for Benedick.

LEONATO O Lord, my lord, if they were but a week married, they would talk themselves mad.

PRINCE County Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

270 CLAUDIO Tomorrow, my lord. Time goes on crutches till love have all his rites.

LEONATO Not till Monday, my dear son, which is hence a just sennight, and a time too brief, too, to have all things answer my mind.

PRINCE Come, you shake the head at so long a breathing, but I warrant  
275 thee, Claudio, the time shall not go dully by us. I will in the interim undertake one of Hercules' labours, which is to bring Signor Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection, th'one with th'other, I would fain have it a match, and I doubt not but to fashion it, if you three will but minister such assistance as I shall give you direction.

280 LEONATO My lord, I am for you, though it cost me ten nights' watchings.

CLAUDIO And I, my Lord.

PRINCE And you too, gentle Hero?

HERO I will do any modest office, my lord, to help my cousin to a good husband.

285 PRINCE And Benedick is not the unhopefullest husband that I know. Thus far can I praise him: he is of a noble strain, of approved valour, and confirmed honesty. I will teach you how to humour your cousin, that she shall fall in love with Benedick, and I, with your two helps, will so practise on Benedick, that in despite of his quick wit, and his  
290 queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer; his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love-gods. Go in with me, and I will tell you my drift. *Exit*

## 2.2

### Sc. 5 *Enter John and Borachio*

JOHN It is so. The Count Claudio shall marry the daughter of Leonato.

BORACHIO Yea, my lord, but I can cross it.

JOHN Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be medicinable to me. I am sick in displeasure to him, and whatsoever comes athwart his  
5 affection ranges evenly with mine. How canst thou cross this marriage?

BORACHIO Not honestly, my lord, but so covertly that no dishonesty shall appear in me.

JOHN Show me briefly how.

BORACHIO I think I told your lordship a year since how much I am in  
10 the favour of Margaret, the waiting gentlewoman to Hero.

JOHN I remember.

#### 2.1.271–2 CLAUDIO

Despite Claudio's professed eagerness for marriage, many productions display a physical awkwardness or shyness between Claudio and Hero, especially if they are very young.

Sc. 5 2.2.2 Yea . . . it Some early productions emphasized Borachio's villainy since he comes up with the plan, which also served to make John a more sympathetic character.

2.1.272 a . . . sennight a week exactly

2.1.273 answer satisfy

2.1.274 breathing pause

2.1.274 warrant guarantee

2.1.276 Hercules' labours in classical myth, Hercules was set twelve near-impossible tasks as penance

2.1.278 fain gladly

2.1.278 fashion work (engineer)

2.1.279 minister give

2.1.280 watchings wakefulness

2.1.283 modest proper (seemly)

2.1.283 office service

2.1.285 unhopefullest least promising

2.1.286 strain birth; character

2.1.286 approved proven

2.1.289 practise on work upon (manipulate)

2.1.290 queasy stomach finicky manner; uneasy appetite (for love)

Sc. 5 2.2.2 cross hinder

2.2.3 bar barrier

2.2.3 cross hindrance

2.2.3 medicinable curative

2.2.4 sick sickened (full of loathing)

2.2.4 to with

2.2.4 comes athwart crosses the path of (impedes)

2.2.5 affection emotions; desires

2.2.5 ranges evenly goes evenly along; lines up with

2.2.9 since ago

BORACHIO I can at any unseasonable instant of the night appoint her to look out at her lady's chamber window.

JOHN What life is in that to be the death of this marriage?

15 BORACHIO The poison of that lies in you to temper. Go you to the Prince your brother. Spare not to tell him that he hath wronged his honour in marrying the renowned Claudio—whose estimation do you mightily hold up—to a contaminated stale, such a one as Hero.

JOHN What proof shall I make of that?

20 BORACHIO Proof enough to misuse the Prince, to vex Claudio, to undo Hero, and kill Leonato. Look you for any other issue?

JOHN Only to despite them I will endeavour anything.

BORACHIO Go then. Find me a meet hour to draw Don Pedro and the Count Claudio alone. Tell them that you know that Hero loves me.

25 Intend a kind of zeal both to the Prince and Claudio (as in love of your brother's honour who hath made this match) and his friend's reputation who is thus like to be cozened with the semblance of a maid, that you have discovered thus. They will scarcely believe this without trial. Offer them instances, which shall bear no less likelihood than to see me at her chamber window, hear me call Margaret Hero, hear Margaret term me Claudio. And bring them to see this the very night before the intended wedding, for in the mean time I will so fashion the matter that Hero shall be absent, and there shall appear such seeming truth of Hero's disloyalty that jealousy shall be called assurance, and all the preparation  
30 overthrown.  
35

JOHN Grow this to what adverse issue it can, I will put it in practice. Be cunning in the working this, and thy fee is a thousand ducats.

BORACHIO Be you constant in the accusation, and my cunning shall not shame me.

40 JOHN I will presently go learn their day of marriage. *Exit*

## 2.3

### Sc. 6 *Enter Benedick alone*

BENEDICK Boy!

BOY Signor?

BENEDICK In my chamber window lies a book, bring it hither to me in the orchard.

5 BOY I am here already sir.

2.2.23–35 Go . . .

**overthrown** Some productions also stage the plan as laid out here by Borachio, in order to clarify the story for audiences, and to elicit more sympathy for the Prince and Claudio.

Sc. 6 2.3.0 *Enter Benedick*

This scene is commonly set in an orchard (2.3.4) or garden.

2.2.12 **unseasonable** late; inappropriate

2.2.12 **instant** time (hour)

2.2.12 **appoint** instruct, i.e. 'get' or 'tell'

2.2.13 **chamber** bedroom

2.2.15 **temper** concoct (blend)

2.2.17 **estimation** reputation; worth

2.2.18 **stale** whore

2.2.19 **make** i.e. give

2.2.20 **misuse** deceive

2.2.20 **vex** torment

2.2.20 **undo** ruin

2.2.21 **issue** outcome

2.2.22 **despite** spite (injure)

2.2.23 **meet** suitable

2.2.25 **Intend** pretend

2.2.25 **zeal** ardent loyalty

2.2.25 **as in** as if in

2.2.27 **like** likely

2.2.27 **cozened** cheated

2.2.27 **semblance** mere appearance

2.2.27 **maid** virgin

2.2.28 **discovered** found out; revealed

2.2.28 **trial** proof

2.2.29 **instances** evidence

2.2.30 **term** call

2.2.32 **fashion** arrange

2.2.34 **jealousy** suspicion

2.2.36 **Grow . . . can** i.e. no matter how damaging the outcome

2.2.37 **working this** working of this

2.2.37 **ducats** gold coins, formerly current in many European countries

2.2.40 **presently** instantly

Sc. 6 2.3.5 I . . . **already** i.e. I'll be back before you notice I've gone; Benedick answers the Boy's cheeky wit by taking him literally

BENEDICK I know that, but I would have thee hence and here again.

[Exit boy]

I do much wonder, that one man seeing how much another man is a fool, when he dedicates his behaviours to love, will after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn, by falling in love, and such a man is Claudio, I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife, and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe: I have known when he would have walked ten mile afoot, to see a good armour, and now will he lie ten nights awake carving the fashion of a new doublet: he was wont to speak plain, and to the purpose (like an honest man and a soldier) and now is he turned orthography, his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes: may I be so converted and see with these eyes? I cannot tell, I think not: I will not be sworn but love may transform me to an oyster, but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool: one woman is fair, yet I am well. Another is wise, yet I am well. Another virtuous, yet I am well. But till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace. Rich she shall be, that's certain. Wise, or I'll none. Virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her. Fair, or I'll never look on her. Mild, or come not near me. Noble, or not I for an angel. Of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what colour it please God. Ha! The Prince and Monsieur Love. I will hide me in the arbour.

*Enter Prince, Leonato, Claudio, [Balthasar with Music]*

PRINCE Come, shall we hear this music?

CLAUDIO Yea, my good lord. How still the evening is,

As hushed on purpose to grace harmony!

PRINCE See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

CLAUDIO O, very well, my lord. The music ended,  
We'll fit the hid-fox with a pennyworth.

PRINCE Come, Balthasar, we'll hear that song again.

BALTHASAR O good my lord, tax not so bad a voice  
To slander music any more then once.

PRINCE It is the witness still of excellency  
To put a strange face on his own perfection.  
I pray thee sing and let me woo no more.

**2.3.6 here again** The boy does not have any re-entry directions, but some productions add to the humour of the scene by having the boy re-enter and try to get the attention of the hidden Benedick, much to Benedick's chagrin.

**2.3.31 See . . . himself** Benedick's hiding place may be very poorly concealed or fairly believable. Benedick may add to the humour of the scene by following the party around the set and attempting to keep himself concealed as he moves.

**2.3.9 argument** subject

**2.3.11 fife** small, shrill flute; like the drum, a military instrument

**2.3.12 tabor** small drum used to accompany the pipe in festive dances and love songs

**2.3.13 afoot** on foot

**2.3.14 carving** designing

**2.3.14 doublet** a close-fitting man's jacket, i.e. a fashionable item

**2.3.14 wont** given (accustomed)

**2.3.15 purpose** point

**2.3.16 turned** become

**2.3.16 orthography** i.e. the embodiment of wordiness (prolixity was associated with affectation in love; compare 1.1.31–2)

**2.3.16 fantastical** wildly imaginative

**2.3.18 but** otherwise than, i.e. I won't swear that love will not . . .

**2.3.19 oyster** i.e. the lowliest creature in the divine hierarchy; prised open and laid bare; made silent by love melancholy like a closed oyster

**2.3.22 grace** favour

**2.3.24 cheapen** haggle for

**2.3.25 Noble** high-born, punning on gold coin

**2.3.25 angel** gold coin, punning on heavenly being

**2.3.30 As** as though

**2.3.30 grace** do honour to

**2.3.33 fit** supply

**2.3.33 hid-fox** allusion to a child's hiding game; compare *Hamlet* 4.2.29–30

**2.3.33 pennyworth** money's worth, i.e. we'll give him more than he bargained for

**2.3.35 tax** command

**2.3.36 slander** disgrace

**2.3.37 witness** mark (proof)

**2.3.37 still** always

**2.3.37 excellency** talent

**2.3.38 put . . . on** i.e. to pretend not to recognize (be bashful about)

**2.3.38 his** its

**2.3.39 woo** flatter (coax)



- 40 **BALTHASAR** Because you talk of wooing I will sing,  
 Since many a wooer doth commence his suit  
 To her he thinks not worthy, yet he woos,  
 Yet will he swear he loves.
- PRINCE** Nay, pray thee, come;  
 Or if thou wilt hold longer argument,  
 45 Do it in notes.
- BALTHASAR** Note this before my notes:  
 There's not a note of mine that's worth the noting.
- PRINCE** Why, these are very crotchets that he speaks—  
 Note notes, forsooth, and nothing!
- BENEDICK** Now, divine air! Now is his soul ravished. Is it not strange  
 50 that sheep's guts should hale souls out of men's bodies? Well, a horn  
 for my money, when all's done.
- [**BALTHASAR**]

BALTHASAR

Continuo  
Editorial  
Reconstruction

4  
Sigh, no more, lad - ies, sigh no more. Men were de - ceiv - ers and  
 Sing no more dit - ties, sing no moe, Of dumps so dull and

7  
ev - er. One foot in sea, and one on shore To one thing  
 hea - vy. The fraud of men was never less, then sigh not so, but let them go, And

11  
be you blithe and bon - ny, Con - vert - ing all your sounds of woe In - to hey non - ny, non - ny,  
 be you blithe and bon - ny, Con - vert - ing all your sounds of woe In - to hey non - ny, non - ny.

Thomas Ford (d. 1648), 'Sigh no more ladies' (stanza 1); editorial reconstruction based on a setting (c.1620) for three voices and continuo.

### The Song.

- Sigh no more ladies, sigh no more.  
 Men were deceivers ever,  
 One foot in sea, and one on shore,  
 55 To one thing constant never.  
 Then sigh not so, but let them go,  
 And be you blithe and bonny,  
 Converting all your sounds of woe,  
 Into hey nonny, nonny.

2.3.41 **suit** courtship

2.3.44 **argument** discussion

2.3.45 **Note** consider (pay attention to)

2.3.46 **noting** paying attention to; some of the various puns on nothing/noting are discussed at Title, here augmented by the senses of musicality and worthlessness

2.3.47 **very** absolute

2.3.47 **crotchets** strange notions (nonsense), punning on the musical note

2.3.48 **Note notes** pay attention to your (musical) notes

2.3.48 **forsooth** indeed

2.3.48 **nothing** nothing else; noticing; female genitalia; male genitalia; musical notes; virginity (pronounced 'noting')

2.3.49 **air** melody

2.3.50 **sheep's guts** from which strings for instruments were made

2.3.50 **hale** drag

2.3.50 **horn** hunting horn, a more masculine instrument; may possibly mean that such love songs lead only to cuckoldry in the end

2.3.57 **blithe** happy

2.3.57 **bonny** beautiful

- 60 Sing no more ditties, sing no moe,  
Of dumps so dull and heavy.  
The fraud of men was ever so  
Since summer first was leafy,  
Then sigh not so, but let them go,  
65 And be you blithe and bonny,  
Converting all your sounds of woe  
Into hey nonny, nonny.
- PRINCE By my troth, a good song.  
BALTHASAR And an ill singer, my lord.
- 70 PRINCE Ha, no. No, faith. Thou singest well enough for a shift.  
BENEDICK *[aside]* An he had been a dog that should have howled thus,  
they would have hanged him; and I pray God his bad voice bode no  
mischief. I had as lief have heard the night-raven, come what plague  
could have come after it.
- 75 PRINCE Yea, marry, dost thou hear, Balthasar? I pray thee, get us some  
excellent music: for tomorrow night we would have it at the lady Hero's  
chamber window.
- BALTHASAR The best I can, my lord. *Exit Balthasar*
- PRINCE Do so. Farewell. Come hither, Leonato. What was it you  
80 told me of today, that your niece Beatrice was in love with Signor  
Benedick?
- CLAUDIO *[aside]* O, ay, stalk on, stalk on, the fowl sits.—I did never  
think that lady would have loved any man.
- LEONATO No, nor I neither. But most wonderful that she should so dote  
85 on Signor Benedick, whom she hath in all outward behaviours seemed  
ever to abhor.
- BENEDICK *[aside]* Is't possible? Sits the wind in that corner?
- LEONATO By my troth my Lord, I cannot tell what to think of it, but that  
she loves him with an enraged affection, it is past the infinite of thought.
- 90 PRINCE May be she doth but counterfeit.
- CLAUDIO Faith like enough.
- LEONATO O God! Counterfeit? There was never counterfeit of passion,  
came so near the life of passion as she discovers it.
- PRINCE Why what effects of passion shows she?
- 95 CLAUDIO Bait the hook well, this fish will bite.
- LEONATO What effects, my lord? She will sit you, you heard my daughter  
tell you how.

2.3.60 **moe** pronounced 'mow' (to rhyme with 'woe' and 'so')

2.3.61 **dumps** sad songs; low spirits

2.3.61 **dull** gloomy or melancholy ('heavy' means the same)

2.3.68 **troth** truth, i.e. upon my word

2.3.69 **ill** bad

2.3.70 **for a shift** for lack of anything better (a makeshift); 'shift' can also mean 'trick' or 'stratagem', so he is perhaps also speaking above the heads of Balthasar and the eavesdropping Benedick, neither of whom know why the other three are really there

2.3.71 **An** if

2.3.72 **bode** portend

2.3.73 **mischief** catastrophe

2.3.73 **as lief** as soon

2.3.73 **night-raven** whose croaking was thought to portend disaster; compare *Troilus and Cressida* 17.184–5

2.3.82 **stalk on** i.e. carry on moving stealthily towards the prey

2.3.82 **fowl sits** Benedick is figured as a game bird sitting unawares in the undergrowth, referring both to his being 'hunted' and to his hiding

2.3.84 **wonderful** extraordinary

2.3.86 **ever** always

2.3.87 **Sits . . . corner?** is that the way the wind blows (is that how it is)?

2.3.89 **enraged** furiously intense

2.3.89 **infinite** infinite capacity, i.e. there's no amount of thinking that can change the fact

2.3.90 **counterfeit** pretend

2.3.91 **like** likely

2.3.93 **discovers** displays

2.3.94 **effects** signs

2.3.96 **sit you** i.e. sit (ethical dative, emphasizing the role of the hearer in what is being said)

CLAUDIO She did indeed.

PRINCE How, how I pray you? You amaze me. I would have thought her spirit had been invincible against all assaults of affection.

LEONATO I would have sworn it had, my lord, especially against Benedick.

BENEDICK [*aside*] I should think this a gull, but that the white-bearded fellow speaks it. Knavery cannot, sure, hide himself in such reverence.

CLAUDIO He hath ta'en th' infection. Hold it up.

PRINCE Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

LEONATO No, and swears she never will. That's her torment.

CLAUDIO 'Tis true, indeed, so your daughter says. 'Shall I,' says she, 'that have so oft encountred him with scorn, write to him that I love him?'

LEONATO This says she now when she is beginning to write to him, for she'll be up twenty times a night, and there will she sit in her smock till she have writ a sheet of paper, my daughter tells us all.

CLAUDIO Now you talk of a sheet of paper, I remember a pretty jest your daughter told us of.

LEONATO O, when she had writ it and was reading it over, she found Benedick and Beatrice between the sheet.

CLAUDIO That.

LEONATO O, she tore the letter into a thousand halfpence, railed at herself, that she should be so immodest to write to one that she knew would flout her. 'I measure him,' says she, 'by my own spirit, for I should flout him if he writ to me, yea, though I love him I should.'

CLAUDIO Then down upon her knees she falls, weeps, sobs, beats her heart, tears her hair, prays, curses, 'O, sweet Benedick, God give me patience'.

LEONATO She doth indeed, my daughter says so, and the ecstasy hath so much overborne he, that my daughter is sometime afeared she will do a desperate outrage to herself. It is very true.

PRINCE It were good that Benedick knew of it by some other, if she will not discover it.

CLAUDIO To what end? He would make but a sport of it and torment the poor lady worse.

PRINCE An he should, it were an alms to hang him. She's an excellent sweet lady, and (out of all suspicion,) she is virtuous.

CLAUDIO And she is exceeding wise.

PRINCE In everything but in loving Benedick.

LEONATO O my Lord, wisdom and blood combating in so tender a body, we have ten proofs to one, that blood hath the victory. I am sorry for her, as I have just cause, being her uncle, and her guardian.

2.3.119 O . . . letter The actors playing Claudio, Leonato, and the Prince may act out all of these gestures.

2.3.131–2 He . . . worse Benedick may react with surprise or embarrassment, or by becoming still and thoughtful.

2.3.103 gull trick

2.3.104 Knavery dishonesty

2.3.104 sure surely

2.3.105 Hold it up keep it going

2.3.112 smock nightdress (slip)

2.3.114 pretty jest funny thing

2.3.116 she i.e. Beatrice

2.3.117 between . . . sheet i.e. their names together on the same piece of paper, with sexual play on 'bedsheets'

2.3.119 halfpence tiny pieces (halfpennies were small coins, both in size and denomination)

2.3.119 railed ranted

2.3.121 flout mock

2.3.126 ecstasy fit (frenzy)

2.3.127 overborne overwhelmed

2.3.128 outrage harm

2.3.130 discover reveal

2.3.131 sport amusement

2.3.133 alms act of charity

2.3.134 suspicion doubt

2.3.137 blood passion

140 PRINCE I would she had bestowed this dotage on me, I would have  
doffed all other respects, and made her half myself. I pray you tell  
Benedick of it, and hear what a will say.

LEONATO Were it good, think you?

CLAUDIO Hero thinks surely she will die, for she says she will die if he  
145 love her not, and she will die ere she make her love known, and she  
will die if he woo her, rather than she will bate one breath of her  
accustomed crossness.

PRINCE She doth well. If she should make tender of her love, 'tis very  
possible he'll scorn it, for the man (as you know all) hath a contemptible  
150 spirit.

CLAUDIO He is a very proper man.

PRINCE He hath indeed a good outward happiness.

CLAUDIO Before God, and in my mind, very wise.

PRINCE He doth indeed show some sparks that are like wit.

155 CLAUDIO And I take him to be valiant.

PRINCE As Hector, I assure you, and in the managing of quarrels you  
may say he is wise, for either he avoids them with great discretion or  
undertakes them with a most Christianlike fear.

LEONATO If he do fear God, a must necessarily keep peace, if he break  
160 the peace, he ought to enter into a quarrel with fear and trembling.

PRINCE And so will he do, for the man doth fear God, howsoever it  
seem not in him by some large jests he will make. Well, I am sorry for  
your niece. Shall we go seek Benedick, and tell him of her love?

CLAUDIO Never tell him, my lord. Let her wear it out with good counsel.

165 LEONATO Nay, that's impossible. She may wear her heart out first.

PRINCE Well, we will hear further of it by your daughter. Let it cool the  
while. I love Benedick well, and I could wish he would modestly examine  
himself to see how much he is unworthy so good a lady.

LEONATO My lord, will you walk? Dinner is ready.

170 CLAUDIO [*aside*] If he do not dote on her upon this, I will never trust my  
expectation.

PRINCE [*aside*] Let there be the same net spread for her, and that must  
your daughter and her gentlewomen carry. The sport will be when  
they hold one an opinion of another's dotage, and no such matter.  
175 That's the scene that I would see, which will be merely a dumb show.  
Let us send her to call him in to dinner.

[*Exit Prince, Claudio, and Leonato*]

BENEDICK This can be no trick. The conference was sadly borne, they  
have the truth of this from Hero, they seem to pity the lady. It seem

2.3.140 **dotage** passionate love

2.3.141 **doffed** cast aside

2.3.141 **respects** considerations

2.3.141 **half myself** i.e. my wife

2.3.142 **a** he

2.3.145 **ere** before

2.3.146 **bate** abate (lessen)

2.3.148 **tender** offer

2.3.149 **contemptible** scornful (contemptuous); worthy of contempt

2.3.151 **proper** good-looking; worthy

2.3.152 **good . . . happiness** pleasant appearance

2.3.153 **Before God** mild oath, similar to 'with God as my witness'

2.3.153 **in** to

2.3.156 **Hector** Trojan leader in Homer's *Iliad*, famed for valour

2.3.157 **discretion** good judgement

2.3.162 **by** to judge by

2.3.162 **large** coarse

2.3.164 **counsel** advice; self-reflection; resolution

2.3.166–7 **the while** for now, i.e. let's leave it in the meantime and  
hopefully it will cool off

2.3.167 **modestly** soberly (reasonably)

2.3.170 **upon** after (as a result of)

2.3.171 **expectation** i.e. sense of what to expect (prediction)

2.3.173 **carry** carry out

2.3.175 **merely** entirely

2.3.175 **dumb show** a wordless scene in a play; he imagines Beatrice  
and Benedick will be uncharacteristically speechless (and thinks  
of it as entertainment)

2.3.177 **conference** conversation

2.3.177 **sadly borne** conducted seriously

her affections have their full bent. Love me! Why, it must be requited.  
 180 I hear how I am censured: they say I will bear myself proudly if I  
 perceive the love come from her. They say too that she will rather die  
 than give any sign of affection. I did never think to marry. I must not  
 seem proud. Happy are they that hear their detractions and can put  
 185 them to mending. They say the lady is fair, 'tis a truth, I can bear them  
 witness. And virtuous—'tis so, I cannot reprove it. And wise, but for  
 loving me. By my troth, it is no addition to her wit—nor no great  
 argument of her folly, for I will be horribly in love with her. I may  
 chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me,  
 because I have railed so long against marriage: but doth not the appetite  
 190 alter? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his  
 age. Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe  
 a man from the career of his humour? No, the world must be peopled.  
 When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till  
 I were married. Here comes Beatrice. By this day, she's a fair lady, I do  
 195 spy some marks of love in her.

*Enter Beatrice*

BEATRICE Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner.

BENEDICK Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

BEATRICE I took no more pains for those thanks, than you take pains to  
 thank me. If it had been painful, I would not have come.

200 BENEDICK You take pleasure, then, in the message?

BEATRICE Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point and  
 choke a daw withal. You have no stomach, Signor? Fare you well. *Exit*

BENEDICK Ha! 'Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner':  
 there's a double meaning in that. 'I took no more pains for those  
 205 thanks than you took pains to thank me': that's as much as to say, 'Any  
 pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks'.—If I do not take pity  
 of her I am a villain. If I do not love her I am a Jew. I will go get her  
 picture. *Exit*

### 3.1

Sc. 7 *Enter Hero and two Gentlewomen, Margaret, and Ursula*

HERO Good Margaret, run thee to the parlour.

There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice

Proposing with the Prince and Claudio.

Whisper her ear and tell her I and Ursley

5 Walk in the orchard and our whole discourse

Is all of her. Say that thou overheardst us,

2.3.179 **full bent** i.e. full scope (like a bow drawn as far as it can go)

2.3.180 **censured** judged

2.3.183 **detractions** faults described

2.3.185 **reprove** disprove (deny)

2.3.185 **but for** except in

2.3.186 **wit** wisdom

2.3.187 **argument** proof

2.3.188 **chance** perchance

2.3.188 **odd** occasional

2.3.188 **quirks** quips

2.3.188 **remnants** bits and pieces

2.3.188 **broken** cracked (spoken; aimed at, in the sense of a lance  
 broken in a joust, i.e. harmless jokes that will have no effect  
 (Benedick's playing down of the likely reaction to his changed  
 attitude is comically hopeful)

2.3.189 **railed** ranted

2.3.191 **sentences** wise sayings

2.3.191 **paper bullets** harmless weapons, i.e. words (which can also  
 be written on paper as satires, etc.)

2.3.191 **awe** intimidate (put off); frighten

2.3.192 **career** headlong gallop (like a horse in a race)

2.3.192 **humour** mood (inclination)

2.3.197 **pains** efforts

2.3.202 **choke** kill (and therefore silence)

2.3.202 **daw** jackdaw (a proverbially stupid bird)

2.3.202 **withal** with

2.3.202 **stomach** appetite

2.3.207 **Jew** seen variously as faithless and pitiless by Elizabethans

2.3.208 **picture** i.e. miniature portrait

Sc. 7 3.1.3 **Proposing** conversing

3.1.194 *Here . . . Beatrice.*  
 Alternatively, some  
 productions have Beatrice  
 enter here.

And bid her steal into the pleachèd bower  
 Where honeysuckles, ripened by the sun,  
 Forbid the sun to enter—like favourites,  
 Made proud by princes, that advance their pride  
 Against that power that bred it. There will she hide her  
 To listen our propose. This is thy office,  
 Bear thee well in it, and leave us alone.

MARGARET I'll make her come I warrant you presently. *[Exit]*

HERO Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come,  
 As we do trace this alley up and down  
 Our talk must only be of Benedick.  
 When I do name him, let it be thy part  
 To praise him more than ever man did merit.  
 My talk to thee must be how Benedick,  
 Is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter  
 Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made,  
 That only wounds by hearsay.

*Enter Beatrice*

Now begin,  
 For look where Beatrice like a lapwing runs  
 Close by the ground to hear our conference.

URSULA The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish  
 Cut with her golden oars the silver stream  
 And greedily devour the treacherous bait.  
 So angle we for Beatrice, who even now,  
 Is couchèd in the woodbine coverture.  
 Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

HERO Then go we near her, that her ear lose nothing  
 Of the false-sweet bait that we lay for it.

*They approach Beatrice's hiding-place*

No, truly Ursula, she is too disdainful.  
 I know her spirits are as coy and wild,  
 As haggards of the rock.

URSULA But are you sure  
 That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

HERO So says the Prince, and my new trothèd Lord.

URSULA And did they bid you tell her of it, madam?

HERO They did intreat me to acquaint her of it,  
 But I persuaded them, if they lov'd Benedick,  
 To wish him wrestle with affection  
 And never to let Beatrice know of it.

Sc. 7 3.1.33.1 *They . . .  
 hiding-place* Productions  
 may feature an elaborate set  
 with a special hiding place for  
 Beatrice, or she may simply be  
 behind an arras. One modern  
 production featured the  
 characters having a  
 conversation over  
 speakerphone, which allowed  
 Beatrice to easily overhear  
 their amplified voices.

3.1.7 **steal** creep

3.1.7 **pleachèd** i.e. made of interlaced branches

3.1.9 **favourites** favoured courtiers

3.1.12 **propose** conversation

3.1.12 **office** duty

3.1.13 **Bear . . . it** i.e. do it well

3.1.14 **warrant** assure

3.1.14 **presently** right away

3.1.16 **trace** walk (follow)

3.1.22 **crafty** cunning; well-made; skilful

3.1.23 **only wounds** wounds only

3.1.23 **hearsay** rumour (with probable play on overhearing)

3.1.24 **lapwing** ground-nesting, wading bird (plover) known for  
 its stealthy, crouched movements through the grass to draw  
 predators away from its nest

3.1.27 **oars** i.e. fins

3.1.30 **couchèd** lying hidden

3.1.30 **woodbine** honeysuckle

3.1.30 **coverture** covered bower (canopy)

3.1.35 **coy** distant (evasive); disdainful

3.1.36 **haggards** mature wild female hawks

3.1.37 **entirely** sincerely; completely

3.1.38 **new trothèd** newly betrothed

3.1.42 **affection** emotion (passion)

URSULA Why did you so? Doth not the gentleman

45 Deserve as full as fortunate a bed  
As ever Beatrice shall couch upon?

HERO O god of love! I know he doth deserve

As much as may be yielded to a man,  
But nature never framed a woman's heart  
50 Of prouder stuff then that of Beatrice.  
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,  
Misprising what they look on, and her wit  
Values itself so highly that to her  
All matter else seems weak. She cannot love,  
55 Nor take no shape nor project of affection,  
She is so self-endearèd.

URSULA Sure, I think so.  
And therefore certainly it were not good  
She knew his love, lest she'll make sport at it.

HERO Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,  
60 How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featured,  
But she would spell him backward. If fair-faced,  
She would swear the gentleman should be her sister.  
If black, why, nature drawing of an antic  
Made a foul blot. If tall, a lance ill headed.  
65 If low, an agate very vilely cut.  
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;  
If silent, why, a block movèd with none.  
So turns she every man the wrong side out,  
And never gives to truth and virtue that  
70 Which simpleness and merit purchaseth.

URSULA Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.

HERO No not to be so odd and from all fashions  
As Beatrice is cannot be commendable.  
But who dare tell her so? If I should speak,  
75 She would mock me into air. O, she would laugh me  
Out of myself, press me to death with wit.  
Therefore let Benedick like cover'd fire,

3.1.72 **HERO** Beatrice has hidden in a fountain, as well as a garden bed where Hero and Ursula used watering cans to drench her. Her hiding spot may explain why she has a cold at 3.4.46.

3.1.44–6 **Doth . . . upon?** i.e. doesn't Benedick deserve to be with Beatrice as much as she with him

3.1.45 **as full as** just as

3.1.45 **fortunate** blessed

3.1.45 **bed** i.e. marriage bed

3.1.46 **couch** lie

3.1.48 **yielded** given; credited

3.1.49 **framed** made

3.1.52 **Misprising** undervaluing (disdaining)

3.1.54 **All . . . else** all other things; anything anyone else says

3.1.54 **weak** deficient; boring

3.1.55 **take** assume; understand

3.1.55 **shape** form

3.1.55 **project** idea (concept)

3.1.56 **self-endearèd** i.e. in love with herself

3.1.60 **How** however (no matter how)

3.1.60 **rarely** beautifully; uncommonly

3.1.60 **featured** i.e. of bodily or facial features (looks)

3.1.61 **spell . . . backward** misrepresent him (declare him the opposite)

3.1.61 **fair-faced** pale complexioned (a mark of feminine beauty); fresh-faced

3.1.63 **antic** grotesque (clownish) figure

3.1.64 **blot** i.e. inkblot, playing on 'black' at 3.1.63

3.1.64 **ill headed** with a misshapen head or point, i.e. the man's head is the only thing distinguishing his form from that of a lance

3.1.65 **low** short

3.1.65 **agate . . . cut** small human figures were often cut into agate stones (gemstones) on rings

3.1.65 **vilely** badly

3.1.66 **vane** weathervane

3.1.67 **block** e.g. of wood (an unfeeling object)

3.1.70 **simpleness** straightforwardness (integrity)

3.1.70 **purchaseth** earns

3.1.71 **carping** fault-finding

3.1.72 **odd** at odds with

3.1.72 **from** away from (contrary to)

3.1.76 **press . . . wit** criminals who refused to plead were crushed to death under heavy weights; implies crushing both through the impact of the wit and the sheer volume of it

3.1.77 **cover'd fire** banked fire (fire that is covered over with ashes, turf etc. to keep a low, hot core smouldering inside)



- Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly.  
 It were a better death than die with mocks,  
 80 Which is as bad as die with tickling.  
 URSULA Yet tell her of it, hear what she will say.  
 HERO No. Rather, I will go to Benedick  
 And counsel him to fight against his passion.  
 And truly I'll devise some honest slanders  
 85 To stain my cousin with. One doth not know  
 How much an ill word may empoison liking.  
 URSULA O, do not do your cousin such a wrong.  
 She cannot be so much without true judgement,  
 Having so swift and excellent a wit  
 90 As she is prized to have, as to refuse  
 So rare a gentleman as Signor Benedick.  
 HERO He is the only man of Italy,  
 Always excepted my dear Claudio.  
 URSULA I pray you be not angry with me, madam,  
 95 Speaking my fancy. Signor Benedick,  
 For shape, for bearing, argument, and valour  
 Goes foremost in report through Italy.  
 HERO Indeed he hath an excellent good name.  
 URSULA His excellence did earn it ere he had it.  
 100 When are you married, madam?  
 HERO Why, every day, tomorrow. Come, go in.  
 I'll show thee some attires, and have thy counsel  
 Which is the best to furnish me tomorrow.  
 URSULA [*aside*] She's limed, I warrant you. We have caught her, madam.  
 105 HERO [*aside*] If it prove so, then loving goes by haps.  
 Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps. [*Exit Hero and Ursula*]  
 BEATRICE What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?  
 Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much?  
 Contempt, farewell; and maiden pride, adieu.  
 110 No glory lives behind the back of such.  
 And, Benedick, love on. I will requite thee,  
 Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand.  
 If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee  
 To bind our loves up in a holy band.  
 115 For others say thou dost deserve, and I  
 Believe it better than reportingly.

Exit

3.1.107 **What fire** In one production, Beatrice delivered this soliloquy (itself an incomplete sonnet) while weeping. In the final two lines, she reached out and clasped the hands of an audience member in the front row.

- 3.1.83 **counsel** advise  
 3.1.84 **honest slanders** i.e. innocent lies or exaggerations about her foibles (not damaging to her integrity)  
 3.1.90 **prized** esteemed  
 3.1.91 **rare** excellent; exceptional  
 3.1.92 **only** best (unrivalled)  
 3.1.95 **fancy** thought; imagination; liking  
 3.1.96 **argument** power of reason; discourse  
 3.1.97 **report** reputation  
 3.1.99 **ere** before  
 3.1.101 **tomorrow** from tomorrow  
 3.1.102 **attires** head-dresses; clothing  
 3.1.103 **furnish** dress; provide  
 3.1.104 **limed** trapped, as by birdlime (a sticky substance used to catch birds)

- 3.1.105 **goes** happens  
 3.1.105 **haps** accidents (luck)  
 3.1.107 **What ... ears?** One's ears burning was then, as now, proverbial for being talked about, though the added sense of wonder at hearing of Benedick's love, and the passion it provokes, is also present.  
 3.1.110 **behind** i.e. on  
 3.1.112 **Taming ... hand** image of a falconer taming a wild bird; compare 3.1.36  
 3.1.114 **band** bond or tie; ring  
 3.1.115 **deserve** i.e. are worthy, deserving of honour and good reputation  
 3.1.116 **reportingly** by hearsay

## 3.2

Sc. 8 Enter Prince, Claudio, Benedick, and Leonato

PRINCE I do but stay till your marriage be consummate, and then go I toward Aragon.

CLAUDIO I'll bring you thither my lord, if you'll vouchsafe me.

PRINCE Nay, that would be as great a soil in the new gloss of your marriage as to show a child his new coat and forbid him to wear it. I will only be bold with Benedick for his company, for from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot he is all mirth. He hath twice or thrice cut Cupid's bow-string, and the little hangman dare not shoot at him. He hath a heart as sound as a bell, and his tongue is the clapper, for what his heart thinks his tongue speaks.

BENEDICK Gallants, I am not as I have been.

LEONATO So say I, methinks you are sadder.

CLAUDIO I hope he be in love.

PRINCE Hang him, truant! There's no true drop of blood in him to be truly touched with love. If he be sad, he wants money.

BENEDICK I have the toothache.

PRINCE Draw it.

BENEDICK Hang it.

CLAUDIO You must hang it first, and draw it afterwards.

PRINCE What? Sigh for the toothache?

LEONATO Where is but a humour or a worm.

BENEDICK Well, everyone can master a grief but he that has it.

CLAUDIO Yet say I, he is in love.

PRINCE There is no appearance of fancy in him, unless it be a fancy that he hath to strange disguises, as to be a Dutchman to day, a Frenchman tomorrow,

## DELETION

D1 or in the shape of two countries at once, as a German from  
D2 the waist downward, all slops, and a Spaniard from the hip upward, no  
D3 doublet.

Unless he have a fancy to this foolery, as it appears he hath, he is no fool for fancy, as you would have it appear he is.

CLAUDIO If he be not in love with some woman, there is no believing old signs. 'A brushes his hat o' mornings, what should that bode?

PRINCE Hath any man seen him at the barber's?

Sc. 8 3.2.31 Hath . . . barber's? Benedick may begin the play with a beard and be clean-shaven by this point.

Sc. 8 3.2.1 consummate performed; celebrated; consummated

3.2.3 bring escort

3.2.3 vouchsafe allow

3.2.4 soil blemish

3.2.4 in on

3.2.6 be bold presume (take the liberty)

3.2.7 all mirth the first of a series of mocks about Benedick's changed state

3.2.8 hangman rascal

3.2.12 sadder more serious or grave (a mark of love melancholy)

3.2.14 truant rogue; one who stays away (a truant from love)

3.2.15 wants lacks

3.2.17 Draw pull; Benedick's reply combines to set up sense of 'disembowel'

3.2.18 Hang it i.e. the hell with it (let it go hang), though extracted teeth were also hung outside barbershops to advertise tooth-drawing services

3.2.19 hang . . . afterwards puns on hanging, drawing, and quartering, perhaps suggestive of Benedick's table-turned tortured state (compare 1.1.184–5)

3.2.21 humour . . . worm Elizabethans imagined toothache as caused by one of the bodily humours (fluids) rotting into the tooth or by worms boring in

3.2.24 fancy love

3.2.24 fancy whim

3.2.25–26.D3 strange . . . doublet young English gallants were frequently mocked in drama and literature of the period for affectation in dress, aping outlandish continental fashions

3.2.26.D2 slops baggy breeches

3.2.26.D3 doublet a close-fitting man's jacket, in this case concealed by the fashionable Spanish cape

3.2.27 fancy whim

3.2.28 fancy love

3.2.30 bode portend (indicate)

- CLAUDIO No, but the barber's man hath been seen with him, and the old ornament of his cheek hath already stuffed tennis balls.
- LEONATO Indeed, he looks younger than he did by the loss of a beard.
- 35 PRINCE Nay, 'a rubs himself with civet. Can you smell him out by that?
- CLAUDIO That's as much as to say the sweet youth's in love.
- [PRINCE] The greatest note of it is his melancholy.
- CLAUDIO And when was he wont to wash his face?
- PRINCE Yea, or to paint himself? For the which I hear what they say
- 40 of him.
- CLAUDIO Nay, but his jesting spirit, which is now crept into a lute-string, and now governed by stops.
- PRINCE Indeed, that tells a heavy tale for him. Conclude, conclude, he is in love.
- 45 CLAUDIO Nay, but I know who loves him.
- PRINCE That would I know too, I warrant, one that knows him not.
- CLAUDIO Yes, and his ill conditions, and in despite of all, dies for him.
- PRINCE She shall be buried with her face upwards.
- BENEDICK Yet is this no charm for the toothache. Old Signor, walk aside
- 50 with me. I have studied eight or nine wise words to speak to you which these hobby-horses must not hear. *[Exit Benedick and Leonato]*
- PRINCE For my life to break with him about Beatrice.
- CLAUDIO 'Tis even so. Hero and Margaret have by this played their parts with Beatrice, and then the two bears will not bite one another
- 55 when they meet.

*Enter John the bastard*

- JOHN My lord, and brother, God save you.
- PRINCE Good e'en, brother.
- JOHN If your leisure served I would speak with you.
- PRINCE In private?
- 60 JOHN If it please you. Yet Count Claudio may hear, for what I would speak of concerns him.
- PRINCE What's the matter?
- JOHN *[to Claudio]* Means your lordship to be married tomorrow?
- PRINCE You know he does.
- 65 JOHN I know not that when he knows what I know.
- CLAUDIO If there be any impediment, I pray you discover it.
- JOHN You may think I love you not. Let that appear hereafter, and aim better at me by that I now will manifest. For my brother (I think he holds you well, and in dearth of heart) hath help to effect your
- 70 ensuing marriage—surely suit ill spent, and labour ill bestowed.

3.2.55.1 *Enter . . . bastard*

In a 1958 production, John's villainy was played so melodramatically that the audience hissed every time he appeared on stage.

3.2.33 **ornament . . . balls** stuffing tennis balls with beard trimmings was an actual practice (and concomitant joke); compare 2.1.26–7

3.2.35 **civet** perfume (from the scent glands of a civet cat)

3.2.35 **smell him out** i.e. find his secret (proverbial, punning on the literal)

3.2.37 **note** sign

3.2.38 **wont** accustomed

3.2.39 **paint himself** use cosmetics

3.2.41–2 **lute-string** the lute was the lover's instrument; compare 1 *Henry IV* 1.2.73–5

3.2.42 **governed by stops** played by frets (or holes in a pipe, another lover's instrument); at the mercy of hindrances; kept in check by denials of love (the traditional fate of the courtly lover)

3.2.43 **heavy** sorrowful; compelling (weight of evidence)

3.2.47 **Yes** i.e. yes she does (on the contrary)

3.2.47 **ill conditions** bad qualities; miserable character

3.2.47 **dies for him** i.e. pines away; Don Pedro's response puns both on the literal sense of 'die' and on the archaic sense meaning to orgasm

3.2.49 **charm** cure

3.2.51 **hobby-horses** buffoons

3.2.53 **by this** by this time

3.2.66 **discover** reveal

3.2.67 **that** i.e. whether or not I love you

3.2.67–8 **aim better at** judge better of

3.2.68 **manifest** reveal

3.2.69 **holds** esteems

3.2.69 **deartheness** fondness

3.2.69 **help** helped

3.2.70 **suit** courtship

PRINCE Why, what's the matter?

JOHN I came hither to tell you, and circumstances shortened—for she has been too long a-talking-of—the lady is disloyal.

CLAUDIO Who, Hero?

75 JOHN Even she. Leonato's Hero, your Hero, every man's Hero.

CLAUDIO Disloyal?

JOHN The word is too good to paint out her wickedness. I could say she were worse. Think you of a worse title, and I will fit her to it. Wonder not till further warrant. Go but with me tonight, you shall see her chamber  
80 window entered, even the night before her wedding day. If you love her then, tomorrow wed her. But it would better fit your honour to change your mind.

CLAUDIO May this be so?

PRINCE I will not think it.

85 JOHN If you dare not trust that you see, confess not that you know. If you will follow me, I will show you enough, and when you have seen more and heard more, proceed accordingly.

CLAUDIO If I see anything tonight why I should not marry her, tomorrow in the congregation where I should wed, there will I shame  
90 her.

PRINCE And as I wooed for thee to obtain her, I will join with thee to disgrace her.

JOHN I will disparage her no farther till you are my witnesses. Bear it coldly but till midnight, and let the issue show itself.

95 PRINCE O day untowardly turned!

CLAUDIO O mischief strangely thwarting!

JOHN O plague right well prevented!—so will you say, when you have seen the sequel. *[Exeunt]*

### 3.3

Sc. 9 *Enter Dogberry and his compartner [Verges], with the Watch*

DOGBERRY Are you good men and true?

VERGES Yea, or else it were pity but they should suffer salvation body and soul.

DOGBERRY Nay, that were a punishment too good for them if they  
5 should have any allegiance in them, being chosen for the Prince's watch.

VERGES Well, give them their charge, neighbour Dogberry.

DOGBERRY First, who think you the most desertless man to be constable?

Sc. 9 3.3.0 *Enter . . .*

*Watch?* Dogberry, Verges, and the Watch are usually marked out as lower class and sometimes even ethnically distinct, with clearly different costumes from the rest of the cast.

3.2.72 **circumstances** details (specifics)

3.2.73 **disloyal** unfaithful

3.2.77 **paint out** describe fully

3.2.78 **Wonder** marvel

3.2.79 **warrant** proof

3.2.81 **fit** befit

3.2.85 **that** that which

3.2.85 **confess** acknowledge (line basically means 'If you won't believe what you see, don't stand by anything you know')

3.2.94 **coldly** calmly

3.2.94 **issue** outcome

3.2.95 **untowardly turned** unluckily changed

3.2.96 **mischief** wickedness; misfortune

3.2.96 **strangely** surprisingly

3.2.96 **thwarting** opposing (his plans)

3.2.97 **plague** disaster; affliction

3.2.98 **the sequel** i.e. what follows

Sc. 9 3.3.0 *Dogberry* rustic name for the fruit of the dogwood (cornel) shrub; establishes the character as something of a yokel

3.3.0 *compartner* fellow officer

3.3.0 *Verges* after verjuice, the bitter juice of unripe grapes (again, suggests rusticity and lack of refinement); after verge, an officer's staff

3.3.0 *Watch* watchmen in a neighbourhood citizen patrol

3.3.2 **salvation** i.e. damnation (the first of many malapropisms as the two officers attempt to show their command through, and of, inflated language)

3.3.5 **allegiance** i.e. disloyalty (unintentional antonym)

3.3.6 **charge** duty (instructions)

3.3.7 **desertless** without merit (he means 'deserving')

3.3.7 **constable** leader of the watch

WATCH 2 Hugh Oatcake, sir, or George Seacole, for they can write and read.

10 DOGBERRY Come hither, neighbour Seacol. God hath blest you with a good name. To be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune, but to write and read comes by nature.

WATCH 1 Both which, Master Constable.—

15 DOGBERRY You have. I knew it would be your answer. Well, for your favour, sir, why, give God thanks, and make no boast of it. And for your writing and reading, let that appear when there is no need of such vanity. You are thought here to be the most senseless and fit man for the constable of the watch, therefore bear you the lantern. This is your charge: you shall comprehend all vagrom men. You are to bid any man stand, in the Prince's name.

20 WATCH 1 How if 'a will not stand?

DOGBERRY Why then take no note of him, but let him go, and presently call the rest of the watch together, and thank God you are rid of a knave.

VERGES If he will not stand when he is bidden, he is none of the Prince's subjects.

25 DOGBERRY True, and they are to meddle with none but the Prince's subjects.—You shall also make no noise in the streets, for for the watch to babble and to talk is most tolerable and not to be endured.

WATCH We will rather sleep than talk. We know what belongs to a watch.

30 DOGBERRY Why, you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman, for I cannot see how sleeping should offend. Only have a care that your bills be not stolen. Well, you are to call at all the alehouses, and bid those that are drunk get them to bed.

WATCH How if they will not?

35 DOGBERRY Why then, let them alone 'til they are sober. If they make you not then the better answer, you may say, they are not the men you took them for.

WATCH Well, sir.

40 DOGBERRY If you meet a thief you may suspect him, by virtue of your office, to be no true man; and for such kind of men, the less you meddle or make with them why, the more is for your honesty.

WATCH If we know him to be a thief, shall we not lay hands on him?

DOGBERRY Truly, by your office you may, but I think they that touch pitch will be defiled. The most peaceable way for you if you do take a thief  
45 is to let him show himself what he is, and steal out of your company.

3.3.13, 21 WATCH 1 Many performances designate him as 'George Seacole'.

3.3.14 You have Portrayals of Dogberry range from a bumbling police officer to an injured army veteran to a country bumpkin. The role is generally associated with physical comedy.

3.3.29 WATCH Directors may divide up the speeches of the 'Watch' among many actors, or as few as three; they may also specify which one is 'Hugh Oat-cake'.

3.3.11 well-favoured good-looking

3.3.11 fortune luck

3.3.12 nature heredity; the number of malapropisms and non sequiturs lead to more than simple inversion here; Dogberry talks about Seacole's looks when he is still on the subject of his name (birth or family), and, while luck could be seen to play its part in looks, genetics are ultimately responsible; reading and writing comes by neither, but by learning

3.3.15 favour appearance (face)

3.3.16–17 let . . . vanity again, it is hard to see the dividing line between Dogberry's failures of language and of logic

3.3.17 senseless he means 'sensible'

3.3.17 fit suitable

3.3.19 comprehend he means 'apprehend'

3.3.19 vagrom nonsense word, malapropism for 'vagrant'

3.3.20 stand halt

3.3.22 note notice

3.3.22 presently immediately

3.3.28 tolerable i.e. intolerable

3.3.29 belongs to is the duty of

3.3.30 ancient experienced (time-worn)

3.3.32 bills halberds (long-handled weapons with a combined spear and axe-head)

3.3.33 them themselves

3.3.36 better i.e. more compliant

3.3.40 office role

3.3.40–1 meddle or make interfere (proverbial)

3.3.41 more is better it will be

3.3.43 by by virtue of

3.3.43–4 they . . . defiled proverbial, i.e. they who meddle with bad affairs will end up tarnished by them (pitch is a black tar-like substance)

3.3.45 show . . . is show his true nature

3.3.45 steal creep (with pun on theft)

VERGES You have been always called a merciful man, partner.

DOGBERRY Truly, I would not hang a dog by my will, much more a man who hath any honesty in him.

VERGES If you hear a child cry in the night you must call to the nurse and bid her still it.

A WATCHMAN How if the nurse be asleep and will not hear us?

DOGBERRY Why then, depart in peace and let the child wake her with crying, for the ewe that will not hear her lamb when it bays will never answer a calf when he bleats.

VERGES 'Tis very true.

DOGBERRY This is the end of the charge. You, constable, are to present the Prince's own person. If you meet the Prince in the night, you may stay him.

VERGES Nay, by'r Lady, that I think 'a cannot.

DOGBERRY Five shillings to one on't with any man that knows the statutes he may stay him. Marry, not without the Prince be willing, for indeed the watch ought to offend no man, and it is an offence to stay a man against his will.

VERGES By'r Lady, I think it be so.

DOGBERRY Ha ah ha! Well, masters, good night. An there be any matter of weight chances, call up me. Keep your fellows's counsels, and your own, and good night. Come, neighbour.

WATCH Well, masters, we hear our charge. Let us go sit here upon the church bench till two, and then all to bed.

DOGBERRY One word more, honest neighbours. I pray you watch about Signor Leonato's door, for the wedding being there tomorrow, there is a great coil tonight. Adieu. Be vigilant, I beseech you.

*Exeunt [Dogberry and Verges. The Watch sit]*

*Enter Borachio and Conrad*

BORACHIO What, Conrad!

WATCH *[aside]* Peace, stir not.

BORACHIO Conrad, I say.

CONRAD Here, man, I am at thy elbow.

BORACHIO Mass, an my elbow itched, I thought there would a scab follow.

CONRAD I will owe thee an answer for that. And now, forward with thy tale.

BORACHIO Stand thee close, then, under this penthouse, for it drizzles rain, and I will, like a true drunkard, utter all to thee.

WATCH *[aside]* Some treason, masters. Yet stand close.

BORACHIO Therefore, know I have earned of Don John a thousand ducats.

CONRAD Is it possible that any villainy should be so dear?

3.3.68, 74, 83 WATCH  
Though these lines can technically be spoken by any of the watchmen, they are often assigned to Watch 1 (Seacoal), the de facto leader.

3.3.72.1 *Enter . . . Conrad!*  
Some productions delay this entrance slightly in order to give the Watch time to doze off or otherwise fall to humorous inattention.

3.3.47 *by my will* by my own choice

3.3.47 *more* i.e. less

3.3.50 *still* quiet (calm)

3.3.56 *charge* commission

3.3.56 *present* represent

3.3.58 *stay* detain

3.3.59 *by'r Lady* by our Lady (the Virgin Mary)

3.3.61 *statutes* laws

3.3.61 *without* unless

3.3.65 *An* if

3.3.66 *chances* occurs

3.3.66 *counsels* confidences (secrets)

3.3.72 *coil* bustle (to-do)

3.3.72 *vigilant* another nonsense word, malapropism for 'vigilant'

3.3.76 *at . . . elbow* i.e. right here

3.3.77 *Mass* by the Mass (a mild oath)

3.3.77 *an* if

3.3.77 *elbow itched* in proverbial terms an itchy elbow warned of bad company

3.3.77 *scab* lesion (from scratching the itch); scoundrel

3.3.81 *close* concealed; near

3.3.81 *penthouse* overhanging roof (porch)

3.3.82 *true drunkard* compare note to 1.3.29.1

3.3.85 *dear* costly

- BORACHIO Thou shouldst rather ask if it were possible any villainy should be so rich? For when rich villains have need of poor ones, poor ones may make what price they will.
- CONRAD I wonder at it.
- 90 BORACHIO That shows thou art unconfirmed. Thou knowest that the fashion of a doublet, or a hat, or a cloak is nothing to a man.
- CONRAD Yes, it is apparel.
- BORACHIO I mean the fashion.
- CONRAD Yes, the fashion is the fashion.
- 95 BORACHIO Tush, I may as well say the fool's the fool. But seest thou not what a deformed thief this fashion is?
- WATCH *[aside]* I know that Deformed. A has been a vile thief this seven year. A goes up and down like a gentleman. I remember his name.
- BORACHIO Didst thou not hear somebody?
- 100 CONRAD No, 'twas the vane on the house.
- BORACHIO Seest thou not (I say) what a deformed thief this fashion is, how giddily a turns about all the hot-bloods between fourteen and five-and-thirty, sometimes fashioning them like Pharaoh's soldiers in the reechy painting, sometime like god Bel's priests in the old church
- 105 window, sometime like the shaven Hercules in the smirched, worm-eaten tapestry, where his codpiece seems as massy as his club.
- CONRAD All this I see, and I see that the fashion wears out more apparel than the man. But art not thou thyself giddy with the fashion, too, that thou hast shifted out of thy tale into telling me of the fashion?
- 110 BORACHIO Not so, neither. But know that I have tonight wooed Margaret, the Lady Hero's gentlewoman, by the name of Hero. She leans me out at her mistress's chamber window, bids me a thousand times good night—I tell this tale vilely, I should first tell thee how the Prince, Claudio, and my master planted and placed and possessed by my master
- 115 Don John, saw afar off in the orchard this amiable encounter.
- CONRAD And thought they Margaret was Hero?
- [BORACHIO] Two of them did, the Prince and Claudio, but the devil my master knew she was Margaret, and partly by his oaths, which first possessed them, partly by the dark night, which did deceive them, but
- 120 chiefly by my villany, which did confirm any slander that Don John

3.3.89 **wonder** marvel

3.3.90 **unconfirmed** inexperienced

3.3.91 **nothing** to i.e. says nothing about, though Conrad misinterprets as 'means nothing to' (another interesting play on the word; compare note to Title)

3.3.92 **apparel** clothing, i.e. it does mean something

3.3.93 **fashion** Borachio goes on to argue that it is slavishness to fashion that deforms and steals people's identity or character

3.3.96 **deformed** i.e. deforming, both in the sense that it changes people and is itself constantly changing, as well, perhaps, that it is sometimes physically odd

3.3.98 **goes . . . down** walks around

3.3.98 **gentleman** according to Elizabethan sumptuary laws, people were forbidden to dress above their station

3.3.100 **vane** weathervane

3.3.102 **hot-bloods** spirited young men

3.3.103 **Pharaoh's soldiers** soldiers of the Egyptian Pharaoh who were killed with their leader pursuing the Israelites through the Red Sea (Exodus 14); he is variously referencing throughout this speech outlandish and unfamiliar fashions, ancient things and their likelihood to recur endlessly in the cycles of fashion, and

the hotchpotch depictions in early modern art of biblical and classical subjects in contemporary dress

3.3.104 **reechy** begrimed by smoke; perhaps indicates the kinds of religious images found in taverns

3.3.104 **god Bel** Baal, the Sumerian god of winds' priests were slain by the King of Persia after Daniel proved their god was false

3.3.104–5 **old . . . window** Catholic iconography (stained glass, in this case) was associated with garishness and ostentatious dress in post-Reformation England

3.3.105 **shaven Hercules** perhaps confusing Hercules with Samson (deliberately obscure or drunken confusion?)

3.3.105 **smirched** stained or grimy (besmirched)

3.3.106 **codpiece** pouch attached to a man's breeches to cover the genitals, fashionable in the Renaissance

3.3.106 **massy** massive

3.3.106 **club** Hercules' weapon, though also alludes to what codpieces usually contain (compare note to 2.1.194)

3.3.109 **shifted** puns on the sense of 'change clothes'

3.3.114 **possessed** i.e. convinced, though the sense of delusion by wickedness or evil is present (Don John is even referred to as a 'devil' at 3.3.117)



had made, away went Claudio enraged, swore he would meet her as he was appointed next morning at the temple, and there, before the whole congregation, shame her, with what he saw o'renight, and send her home again without a husband.

125 WATCH 1 [*to Conrad and Borachio*] We charge you in the Prince's name. Stand.

WATCH 2 Call up the right Master Constable. We have here recovered the most dangerous piece of lechery that ever was known in the commonwealth.

130 WATCH 1 And one Deformed is one of them I know him—'a wears a lock.

CONRAD Masters, masters.

WATCH 2 You'll be made bring Deformed forth, I warrant you.

CONRAD Masters,—

135 [WATCH] Never speak. We charge you. Let us obey you to go with us.

BORACHIO [*to Conrad*] We are like to prove a goodly commodity, being taken up of these men's bills.

CONRAD A commodity in question I warrant you. Come, we'll obey you.

*Exeunt*

3.3.127 Call . . . Constable  
Some productions have  
Dogberry return to the stage  
in response to this call to help  
contain Conrad and  
Borachio.

### 3.4

Sc. 10 *Enter Hero, and Margaret, and Ursula*

HERO Good Ursula, wake my cousin Beatrice, and desire her to rise.

URSULA I will, lady.

HERO And bid her come hither.

URSULA Well.

5 MARGARET Troth, I think your other rebato were better.

HERO No, pray thee, good Meg, I'll wear this.

MARGARET By my troth, 's not so good, and I warrant your cousin will say so.

HERO My cousin's a fool, and thou art another, I'll wear none but this.

10 MARGARET I like the new tire within excellently, if the hair were a thought browner. And your gown's a most rare fashion i'faith. I saw the Duchess of Milan's gown that they praise so.

HERO O, that exceeds, they say.

MARGARET By my troth, 's but a night-gown in respect of yours—cloth  
15 a gold, and cuts, and laced with silver, set with pearls, down sleeves,

Sc. 10 3.4.5 Troth . . .  
**better** Some productions use  
this line to suggest that  
Margaret may have worn this  
garment with Borachio, and  
thus that her response here is  
motivated in part out of guilt.

3.3.122 **temple** church

3.3.125 **charge** order

3.3.127 **right** i.e. true or good; an intensifier as in 'right honourable', etc.

3.3.127 **recovered** malapropism for 'discovered' or 'uncovered'

3.3.128 **lechery** malapropism for 'treachery', though unintentionally apt

3.3.131 **lock** lovelock (a lock of hair grown longer than the rest)

3.3.132 **Masters** officers

3.3.133 **made** made to

3.3.135 **obey** i.e. order

3.3.136 **like** likely

3.3.136 **commodity** useful article; goods bought on credit

3.3.137 **taken up** received on credit; arrested

3.3.137 **bills** halberds (weapons); bonds given as security for goods

3.3.138 **in question** sought after; of doubtful value; on legal trial

3.3.138 **warrant** i.e. assure, though may also pun on senses of act as pledge and of arrest warrant

Sc. 10 3.4.5 **rebato** ruff (stiff ornamental collar)

3.4.10 **tire** elaborate head-dress fixed with false hair and ornaments, often mocked for gaudiness; it is interesting that Margaret's praise of ornate fashions follows on from Borachio's condemnation of them in the previous scene, which might somewhat crassly suggest her feminine frivolity against his masculine gravity, though equally might suggest that her innocence (from crime and the desire to damage others) enables a more balanced perspective, unattached to issues of self-disgust

3.4.10 **within** i.e. in another (inner) room

3.4.10–11 **a thought** a tad (to match Hero's)

3.4.11 **rare** excellent

3.4.13 **exceeds** outdoes all

3.4.14 **in respect of** compared with

3.4.15 **cuts** ornamental slashes to show off the rich lining

3.4.15 **laced** trimmed

3.4.15 **down sleeves** tight fitting, wrist-length sleeves

side sleeves, and skirts, round underborne with a bluish tinsel. But for a fine quaint, graceful, and excellent fashion, yours is worth ten on't.

HERO God give me joy to wear it, for my heart is exceeding heavy.

MARGARET 'Twill be heavier soon by the weight of a man.

20 HERO Fie upon thee, art not ashamed?

MARGARET Of what, lady? Of speaking honourably? Is not marriage honourable in a beggar? Is not your Lord honourable without marriage?

I think you would have me say, 'saving your reverence a husband'. An bad thinking do not wrest true speaking, I'll offend nobody. Is there any harm in 'the heavier for a husband'? None, I think, and it be the right husband, and the right wife, otherwise 'tis light and not heavy. Ask my Lady Beatrice else. Here she comes.

*Enter Beatrice*

HERO Good morrow, coz.

BEATRICE Good morrow, sweet Hero.

30 HERO Why, how now? Do you speak in the sick tune?

BEATRICE I am out of all other tune, methinks.

MARGARET Clap's into 'Light o' love'. That goes without a burden. Do you sing it, and I'll dance it.

BEATRICE Ye light o' love with your heels. Then if your husband have  
35 stables enough, you'll see he shall lack no barns.

MARGARET O illegitimate construction! I scorn that with my heels.

BEATRICE 'Tis almost five a'clock, cousin. 'Tis time you were ready. By my troth, I am exceeding ill. Hey-ho!

MARGARET For a hawk, a horse, or a husband?

40 BEATRICE For the letter that begins them all, 'H'.

MARGARET Well, and you be not turned Turk, there's no more sailing by the star.

BEATRICE What means the fool, trow?

MARGARET Nothing I. But God send every one their heart's desire.

3.4.19 'Twill . . . man Some productions present a Hero who is much more knowing and amused by the sexual jokes than she lets on, while others emphasize her inexperience by having her blush or turn away.

3.4.16 **side sleeves** loose, open sleeves draped from the shoulder

3.4.16 **round** all the way around

3.4.16 **underborne** trimmed at the bottom; supported (as by a farthingale)

3.4.17 **quaint** lovely; intricate

3.4.17 **on't** of it

3.4.20 **Fie** more serious expression of indignation or disgust

3.4.21–2 **marriage . . . beggar** proverbial (marriage was heavily encouraged in Protestant doctrine)

3.4.22 **in** even in

3.4.23 **saving . . . reverence** by your leave or begging your pardon; a polite term here used mockingly to suggest Hero's propriety is excessive

3.4.23 **husband** i.e. instead of 'man'

3.4.23 **An** if

3.4.24 **wrest** twist

3.4.26 **light** punning on sense of 'promiscuous'

3.4.26 **heavy** punning on sense of 'serious' (committed)

3.4.27 **else** (if it's) otherwise

3.4.28 **coz** cousin

3.4.30 **sick** unwell; sad

3.4.30 **tune** state (of mind)

3.4.32 **Clap's into** i.e. start clapping as a prelude to singing

3.4.32 '**Light o' love**' a popular ballad tune; Margaret is ostensibly telling them to be 'light' in the sense of cheerful while continuing to pun on the various sexual senses

3.4.32 **burden** bass-line, the man's part; weight (continuing to pun on heavy/light and the idea of being under the weight of a man); the resultant child in the womb

3.4.33 **dance** playing on sexual connotations of dancing, picked up by Beatrice

3.4.34 **light . . . heels** i.e. loose or promiscuous (light-heeled)

3.4.35 **stables** rooms (wealth); erections; stable-hands or tenants on his land

3.4.35 **barns** puns on 'bairns', i.e. children

3.4.36 **illegitimate construction** false interpretation (punning on illegitimately conceived children)

3.4.36 **scorn . . . heels** reject that by stamping or grinding it (with the heel); moving or running away from it; or kicking it

3.4.39 **For . . . husband** heigh-ho could be used as a call for a hawk or a horse, while husband refers to a popular ballad (compare 2.1.242–3)

3.4.40 **H** ache; achoo

3.4.41 **turned Turk** changed your faith (from mockery to love)

3.4.42 **star** the North or Pole Star, a constant and fixed presence in the night sky (compare *Julius Caesar* 3.1.60–2) used by sailors to navigate, i.e. there's nothing we can depend on any more

3.4.43 **trow** I wonder

45 HERO These gloves the Count sent me, they are an excellent perfume.

BEATRICE I am stuffed, cousin, I cannot smell.

MARGARET A maid and stuffed! There's goodly catching of cold.

BEATRICE O, God help me, God help me. How long have you professed apprehension?

50 MARGARET Ever since you left it. Doth not my wit become me rarely?

BEATRICE It is not seen enough. You should wear it in your cap. By my troth, I am sick.

MARGARET Get you some of this distilled *Carduus benedictus*, and lay it to your heart. It is the only thing for a qualm.

55 HERO [to Margaret] There thou prickest her with a thistle.

BEATRICE Benedictus, why benedictus? You have some moral in this benedictus.

MARGARET Moral? No, by my troth I have no moral meaning. I meant plain holy-thistle. You may think perchance that I think you are in love.

60 Nay, by'r Lady, I am not such a fool to think what I list, nor I list not to think what I can, nor indeed I cannot think, if I would think my heart out of thinking, that you are in love, or that you will be in love, or that you can be in love. Yet Benedick was such another, and now is he become a man. He swore he would never marry, and yet now in despite of his

65 heart he eats his meat without grudging. And how you may be converted I know not, but methinks you look with your eyes as other women do.

BEATRICE What pace is this that thy tongue keeps?

MARGARET Not a false gallop.

*Enter Ursula.*

URSULA Madame, withdraw. The Prince, the Count, Signor Benedick, 70 Don John, and all the gallants of the town are come to fetch you to church.

HERO Help to dress me, good coz, good Meg, good Ursula. *[Exit]*

### 3.5

Sc. 11 *Enter Leonato, and [Dogberry] the constable, and [Verges] the headborough*

LEONATO What would you with me, honest neighbour?

DOGBERRY Marry, sir, I would have some confidence with you that decerns you nearly.

LEONATO Brief I pray you, for you see it is a busy time with me.

5 DOGBERRY Marry, this it is, sir.

VERGES Yes, in truth it is, sir.

LEONATO What is it, my good friends?

3.4.46 **stuffed** i.e. stuffed up (with cold)

3.4.47 **maid** virgin

3.4.47 **stuffed** fairly strong vulgar slang for sex (modern equivalent might be 'screwed'); pregnant

3.4.48–9 **professed apprehension** practised wit

3.4.50 **rarely** excellently (Beatrice puns on 'infrequently')

3.4.51 **wear . . . cap** i.e. keep it on display as an ornament (compare *Hamlet* 17.74), with the added sense of a fool wearing his coxcomb in his cap

3.4.53 *Carduus benedictus* thistle plant, thought a good remedy for heart diseases

3.4.54 **qualm** sudden faintness or nausea (could imply faintness from lovesickness and/or nausea from morning sickness)

3.4.55 **prickest . . . thistle** i.e. hit home, with probable sense of sex with Benedick or Benedick's prick

3.4.56 **moral** hidden meaning

3.4.58 **moral meaning** i.e. her meaning is immoral (lewd)

3.4.60 **list** please

3.4.63 **such another** i.e. similarly against love

3.4.63–4 **become a man** i.e. is just like other men (in love)

3.4.65 **eats his meat** i.e. accepts his human needs

3.4.68 **a false gallop** i.e. anything untrue (a false gallop was a controlled canter, making the horse move somewhat artificially)

Sc. 11 3.5.0.2 *headborough* parish officer

3.5.2 **confidence** possible malapropism for 'conference' (conversation), though the sense of confidential discussion is apt

3.5.3 **decerns** malapropism for 'concerns'

3.5.3 **nearly** closely

3.4.46 I . . . **smell** Beatrice's cold is sometimes played for comic effect with a nasal voice, a hanky, and a red nose.

DOGBERRY Goodman Verges, sir, speaks a little of the matter,—an old man sir, and his wits are not so blunt, as God help, I would desire they were. But in faith, honest as the skin between his brows.

VERGES Yes, I thank God, I am as honest as any man living that is an old man and no honestier then I.

DOGBERRY Comparisons are odorous. Palabras, neighbour Verges.

LEONATO Neighbours, you are tedious.

DOGBERRY It pleases your worship to say so, but we are the poor Duke's officers. But truly for mine own part, if I were as tedious as a king I could find in my heart to bestow it all of your worship.

LEONATO All thy tediousness on me, ah?

DOGBERRY Yea, and 'twere a thousand pound more than 'tis, for I hear as good exclamation on your worship as of any man in the city, and though I be but a poor man, I am glad to hear it.

VERGES And so am I.

LEONATO I would fain know what you have to say.

VERGES Marry, sir, our watch tonight, excepting your worship's presence, ha' ta'en a couple of as arrant knaves as any in Messina.

DOGBERRY A good old man sir. He will be talking. As they say, when the age is in, the wit is out, God help us, it is a world to see. Well said, i' faith, neighbour Verges. Well, God's a good man. An two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind. An honest soul i' faith, sir, by my troth he is, as ever broke bread. But God is to be worshipped, all men are not alike, alas good neighbour.

LEONATO Indeed, neighbour, he comes too short of you.

DOGBERRY Gifts that God gives!

LEONATO I must leave you.

DOGBERRY One word, sir. Our watch, sir, have indeed comprehended two auspicious persons, and we would have them this morning examined before your worship.

LEONATO Take their examination yourself, and bring it me. I am now in great haste, as it may appear unto you.

DOGBERRY It shall be suffigance.

LEONATO Drink some wine ere you go. Fare you well.

*[Enter a Messenger]*

MESSENGER My lord, they stay for you, to give your daughter to her husband.

LEONATO I'll wait upon them, I am ready.

*[Exit Leonato and Messenger]*

DOGBERRY Go, good partner, go get you to Francis Seacole, bid him bring his pen and inkhorn to the jail. We are now to examination these men.

Sc. 11 3.5.8–10 Goodman . . . brows Verges' reverential treatment of Dogberry, even as Dogberry insults him, is often mined for laughs in this scene. The scene was originally intended for two clowns in Shakespeare's playing company who worked together frequently.

3.5.41 Fare you well Dogberry's failed exit may be played for laughs if he keeps coming back for more wine or finding other reasons to stay on stage. Alternatively, he may march offstage with purpose only to march back on a few lines later.

3.5.8 Goodman title for one below gentlemanly status

3.5.9 blunt he means 'sharp'

3.5.13 odorous i.e. 'odious'

3.5.13 Palabras i.e. quiet, after the Spanish tag *pauca palabras* meaning 'few words'

3.5.14 tedious Dogberry thinks it is a compliment, meaning something like 'rich'

3.5.15 poor Duke's i.e. Duke's poor

3.5.20 exclamation loud complaint (he means 'acclamation')

3.5.23 fain gladly

3.5.24 tonight last night

3.5.24 excepting malapropism for 'respecting', i.e. if I may be so bold in your presence

3.5.25 arrant downright

3.5.27 it . . . world i.e. it's a marvel

3.5.29 An if

3.5.32 comes . . . of doesn't measure up to

3.5.35 comprehended i.e. apprehended

3.5.36 auspicious boding of success or favourable (he of course means 'suspicious')

3.5.40 suffigance nonsense word, malapropism for 'sufficient'

3.5.42 stay wait

3.5.46 examination malapropism for 'examine'

VERGES And we must do it wisely.

DOGBERRY We will spare for no wit, I warrant you. Here's that shall  
50 drive some of them to a non-com. Only get the learned writer to set  
down our excommunication, and meet me at the jail.

4.1

Sc. 12 Enter [Don Pedro] the Prince, [Don John] the bastard, Leonato, Friar  
[Francis], Claudio, Benedick, Hero, and Beatrice

LEONATO Come, Friar Francis, be brief, only to the plain form of  
marriage, and you shall recount their particular duties afterwards.

FRIAR [to Claudio] You come hither, my lord, to marry this lady?

CLAUDIO No.

5 LEONATO To be married to her. Friar, you come to marry her.

FRIAR [to Hero] Lady, you come hither to be married to this Count?

HERO I do.

FRIAR If either of you know any inward impediment why you should  
not be conjoined, I charge you on your souls to utter it.

10 CLAUDIO Know you any, Hero?

HERO None, my lord.

FRIAR Know you any, Count?

LEONATO I dare make his answer—none.

15 CLAUDIO O, what men dare do! What men may do! What men daily do,  
not knowing what they do!

BENEDICK How now! Interjections? Why then, some be of laughing, as,  
'ah, ha, he!'

CLAUDIO Stand thee by, Friar, [To Leonato] father by your leave,  
Will you with free and unconstrained soul

20 Give me this maid your daughter?

LEONATO As freely, son, as God did give her me.

CLAUDIO And what have I to give you back whose worth  
May counterpoise this rich and precious gift?

[PRINCE] Nothing, unless you render her again.

25 CLAUDIO Sweet Prince, you learn me noble thankfulness.

There, Leonato, take her back again.

Give not this rotten orange to your friend.

She's but the sign and semblance of her honour.

Behold how like a maid she blushes here!

30 O, what authority and show of truth

Can cunning sin cover itself withal!

Comes not that blood, as modest evidence

Sc. 12 4.1.26 There . . .  
again Claudio often violently  
grabs Hero's arm and shoves  
her here. In one production,  
Claudio delivered his  
accusations while visibly and  
violently sobbing.

3.5.50 **non-com** presumably means non-plus (state of perplexity),  
but also recalls, not inaptly, *non compos mentis*, i.e. mad

3.5.50 **set** write

3.5.51 **excommunication** another malapropism for 'examination'

Sc. 12 4.1.1 **plain form** simple form, without preliminary detailing  
of all the obligations of marriage, i.e. cut to the chase

4.1.8 **inward** secret or private

4.1.16–17 **How . . . he!** Benedick quotes William Lyly's standard  
Latin grammar text for schools (1538) on laughter as an  
interjection, apparently to make light of the odd scene Claudio is  
beginning to make

4.1.18 **Stand . . . by** stand aside

4.1.18 **by . . . leave** with your permission (either to call him 'father'  
or to speak)

4.1.19 **unconstrained soul** unforced spirit; clear conscience

4.1.23 **counterpoise** balance (repay)

4.1.24 **render . . . again** give her back

4.1.25 **learn** teach

4.1.27 **rotten orange** oranges were associated with prostitutes  
(possibly an association between the pitted rind and pock-  
marked, syphilitic skin) and with deceptiveness, in that their  
sour rind belies their sweet flesh; compare 2.1.224

4.1.28 **sign** show

4.1.28 **semblance** outward appearance

4.1.29 **maid** virgin

4.1.32 **blood** i.e. blush

- To witness simple virtue? Would you not swear,  
 All you that see her, that she were a maid,  
 35 By these exterior shows? But she is none:  
 She knows the heat of a luxurious bed.  
 Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.
- LEONATO What do you mean, my lord?
- CLAUDIO Not to be married,  
 Not to knit my soul to an approvèd wanton.
- 40 LEONATO Dear my lord, if you in your own proof  
 Have vanquished the resistance of her youth,  
 And made defeat of her virginity—
- CLAUDIO I know what you would say. If I have known her,  
 You will say, she did embrace me as a husband,  
 45 And so extenuate the forehead sin.  
 No, Leonato,  
 I never tempted her with word too large,  
 But as a brother to his sister showed  
 Bashful sincerity and comely love.
- 50 HERO And seemed I ever otherwise to you?
- CLAUDIO Out on thee, seeming. I will write against it.  
 You seem to me as Dian in her orb,  
 As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown.  
 But you are more intemperate in your blood  
 55 Than Venus, or those pampered animals,  
 That rage in savage sensuality.
- HERO Is my lord well that he doth speak so wide?
- LEONATO Sweet Prince, why speak not you?
- PRINCE What should I speak?  
 I stand dishonoured that have gone about,  
 60 To link my dear friend to a common stale.
- LEONATO Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?
- JOHN Sir, they are spoken, and these things are true.
- BENEDICK This looks not like a nuptial.
- HERO 'True'? O God!
- 65 CLAUDIO Leonato, stand I here?  
 Is this the Prince? Is this the Prince's brother?  
 Is this face Hero's? Are our eyes our own?
- LEONATO All this is so. But what of this, my lord?
- CLAUDIO Let me but move one question to your daughter,  
 70 And by that fatherly and kindly power,  
 That you have in her, bid her answer truly.
- LEONATO [*to Hero*] I charge thee do so, as thou art my child.

4.1.33 **witness** bear witness to  
 4.1.36 **luxurious** lustful  
 4.1.39 **approvèd** proven  
 4.1.39 **wanton** slut  
 4.1.40 **proof** test (of her); experience  
 4.1.43 **known** i.e. carnally  
 4.1.45 **extenuate** lessen  
 4.1.45 **forehand** beforehand (prior)  
 4.1.47 **large** unrestrained; lewd  
 4.1.49 **comely** proper (becoming)  
 4.1.51 **Out on** curses upon (damn)  
 4.1.51 **seeming** (and your) pretence  
 4.1.51 **write against** i.e. publish (and denounce)

4.1.52 **Dian** or Diana, the Roman goddess of chastity  
 4.1.52 **orb** the moon (in which Diana was thought to live, and with which she was associated); the moon's orbit or sphere (compare *Romeo and Juliet* 8.151–2)  
 4.1.53 **blown** opened  
 4.1.54 **intemperate** uncontrolled; immoderate  
 4.1.54 **blood** sensual passion  
 4.1.55 **Venus** Roman goddess of love  
 4.1.57 **wide** i.e. of the mark  
 4.1.60 **stale** whore  
 4.1.69 **move** put  
 4.1.70 **kindly** natural (kin)

HERO O God defend me how am I beset,

What kind of catechizing call you this?

75 CLAUDIO To make you answer truly to your name.

HERO Is it not Hero, who can blot that name

With any just reproach?

CLAUDIO Marry, that can Hero.

Hero itself can blot out Hero's virtue.

What man was he talked with you yesternight,

80 Out at your window betwixt twelve and one?

Now if you are a maid, answer to this.

HERO I talked with no man at that hour, my lord.

PRINCE Why then are you no maiden. Leonato,

I am sorry you must hear. Upon mine honour,

85 Myself, my brother, and this grievèd Count

Did see her, hear her, at that hour last night

Talk with a ruffian at her chamber window,

Who hath indeed most like a liberal villain,

Confessed the vile encounters they have had

90 A thousand times in secret.

JOHN Fie, fie, they are

Not to be named my lord, not to be spoke of.

There is not chastity enough in language

Without offence to utter them. Thus, pretty lady,

I am sorry for thy much misgovernment.

95 CLAUDIO O Hero! What a Hero hadst thou been

If half thy outward graces had been placed

About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!

But fare thee well, most foul, most fair, farewell

Thou pure impiety, and impious purity.

100 For thee I'll lock up all the gates of love,

And on my eyelids shall conjecture hang

To turn all beauty into thoughts of harm

And never shall it more be gracious.

LEONATO Hath no man's dagger here a point for me?

*[Hero falls to the ground]*

105 BEATRICE Why how now cousin, wherefore sink you down?

JOHN Come let us go: these things come thus to light,

Smother her spirits up.

BENEDICK How doth the lady?

BEATRICE Dead, I think. Help, uncle.

Hero, why Hero! Uncle, Signor Benedick, Frier—

110 LEONATO O fate! Take not away thy heavy hand.

Death is the fairest cover for her shame

That may be wished for.

BEATRICE How now, cousin Hero?

FRIAR Have comfort lady.

4.1.87 Talk . . . window  
Beatrice may react strongly  
to this accusation as she  
mentions it again later in the  
scene.

4.1.73 **beset** besieged; surrounded

4.1.74 **catechizing** questioning or examination (the Anglican catechism was a series of questions about faith, the first being 'what is your name?')

4.1.75 **answer . . . name** compare note to 1.1.0.1

4.1.88 **liberal** licentious; unrestrained (in speech or behaviour)

4.1.93 **Without . . . them** i.e. to relate them without causing offence

4.1.94 **misgovernment** misconduct

4.1.96 **outward graces** physical beauty; apparent virtues

4.1.97 **counsels** urgings; secrets

4.1.100 **For** because of

4.1.101 **conjecture** suspicion

4.1.105 **wherefore** why

4.1.107 **spirits** vital powers



- LEONATO Dost thou look up?
- 115 FRIAR Yea, wherefore should she not?
- LEONATO Wherefore? Why, doth not every earthly thing  
Cry shame upon her? Could she here deny  
The story that is printed in her blood?  
Do not live, Hero, do not ope thine eyes,  
120 For did I think thou wouldst not quickly die,  
Thought I thy spirits were stronger than thy shames,  
Myself would on the rearward of reproaches  
Strike at thy life. Grieved I I had but one?  
Chid I for that at frugal nature's frame?  
125 O, one too much by thee! Why had I one?  
Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?  
Why had I not with charitable hand,  
Took up a beggar's issue at my gates,  
Who smirched thus and mired with infamy,  
130 I might have said 'No part of it is mine,  
This shame derives itself from unknown loins.'  
But mine, and mine I loved, and mine I praised,  
And mine that I was proud on mine so much,  
That I myself, was to myself not mine,  
135 Valuing of her—why she, O she is fallen  
Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea  
Hath drops too few to wash her clean again,  
And salt too little, which may season give  
To her foul tainted flesh.
- BENEDICK Sir, sir, be patient.
- 140 For my part, I am so attired in wonder  
I know not what to say.
- BEATRICE O, on my soul my cousin is belied.
- BENEDICK Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?
- BEATRICE No, truly not, although until last night  
145 I have this twelvemonth been her bedfellow.
- LEONATO Confirmed, confirmed. O, that is stronger made  
Which was before barred up with ribs of iron.  
Would the two princes lie? And Claudio lie,  
Who loved her so, that speaking of her foulness,  
150 Washed it with tears? Hence from her, let her die.
- FRIAR Hear me a little,  
For I have only [silent been] so long,  
and given way unto this course of fortune,  
[...]

## 4.1.116 LEONATO

Eighteenth-century performances often cut this speech to make Leonato a more ideal father figure.

4.1.114 **look up** revive; look heavenward (a sign of innocence)  
 4.1.118 **printed** ... **blood** evidenced by her blushes of shame; the supposed innate weakness within her as in all women, deriving from the story of the fall of man (Genesis 3:1–24)  
 4.1.122 **on** ... of following immediately after (like a military rearguard action)  
 4.1.123 **one** i.e. child  
 4.1.124 **Chid** scolded or rebuked  
 4.1.124 **frame** plan  
 4.1.128 **up** in  
 4.1.128 **issue** progeny (child)  
 4.1.129 **smirched** stained or begrimed (with sin); used in the literal sense at 3.3.105

4.1.129 **mired** soiled or begrimed; sunken (a 'mire' is a bog)  
 4.1.131 **derives** descends  
 4.1.134–5 **mine** ... **her** I cared for her so much I cared nothing for myself  
 4.1.138 **season** i.e. seasoning (both to preserve and make palatable)  
 4.1.140 **attired** clothed, i.e. immersed or overcome  
 4.1.140 **wonder** amazement  
 4.1.142 **belied** slandered (lied about)  
 4.1.147 **barred up** reinforced  
 4.1.153–5 **given** ... **lady** i.e. allowed this course of events to proceed in order to observe the lady's true reaction

155 By noting of the lady. I have marked  
 A thousand blushing apparitions  
 To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames  
 In angel whiteness beat away those blushes,  
 And in her eye there hath appeared a fire  
 160 To burn the errors that these princes hold  
 Against her maiden truth. Call me a fool,  
 Trust not my reading, nor my observations,  
 Which with experimental seal doth warrant  
 The tenor of my book. Trust not my age,  
 165 My reverence, calling, nor divinity.  
 If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here,  
 Under some biting error.

LEONATO Friar, it cannot be.  
 Thou seest that all the grace that she hath left,  
 Is that she will not add to her damnation  
 170 A sin of perjury. She not denies it:  
 Why seek'st thou then to cover with excuse  
 That which appears in proper nakednesse?

FRIAR Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

HERO They know that do accuse me, I know none.

175 If I know more of any man alive  
 Then that which maiden modesty doth warrant,  
 Let all my sins lack mercy. O my father,  
 Prove you that any man with me conversed  
 At hours unmeet, or that I yesternight  
 180 Maintained the change of words with any creature,  
 Refuse me, hate me, torture me to death.

FRIAR There is some strange misprision in the princes.

BENEDICK Two of them have the very bent of honour,  
 And if their wisdoms be misled in this,  
 185 The practice of it lives in John the bastard,  
 Whose spirits toil in frame of villanies.

LEONATO I know not. If they speak but truth of her,  
 These hands shall tear her. If they wrong her honour  
 The proudest of them shall well hear of it.  
 190 Time hath not yet so dried this blood of mine,  
 Nor age so eat up my invention,  
 Nor fortune made such havoc of my means,  
 Nor my bad life reft me so much of friends,

4.1.188 These . . . her  
 Leonato may seem so agitated  
 in this speech in such a way  
 that the friar feels compelled  
 to calm him.

4.1.155 **noting** paying close attention; here 'noting' has an authenticating function that can help undo to the damage caused by the confused overhearing, mistaken observation, and sexual jealousy bound up in the word's significance to the plot (compare note to Title)

4.1.155 **marked** noted (observed)

4.1.157 **start** rush

4.1.163 **experimental seal** i.e. the confirmation of experience

4.1.163 **warrant** act as pledge for

4.1.164 **tenor** substance (content)

4.1.164 **book** i.e. learning

4.1.166–7 **lie . . . Under** to 'lie under' means suffer the consequence of, though Hero is presumably still on the floor at this point too

4.1.167 **biting** severe; wounding or damaging

4.1.172 **proper** true

4.1.176 **warrant** allow

4.1.179 **unmeet** improper

4.1.180 **change** exchange

4.1.181 **Refuse** disown

4.1.182 **misprision** misconception (error)

4.1.183 **very bent** true disposition

4.1.185 **practice** trickery

4.1.186 **frame** framing (plotting)

4.1.190 **dried** a sign of old age; compare 2.1.88

4.1.191 **eat** eaten

4.1.191 **invention** mental faculties; cunning or inventiveness

4.1.192 **means** resources (money)

4.1.193 **reft** bereft

But they shall find awaked in such a kind  
 195 Both strength of limb and policy of mind,  
 Ability in means, and choice of friends,  
 To quit me of them thoroughly.  
 FRIAR Pause awhile,  
 And let my counsel sway you in this case,  
 Your daughter here the princes left for dead,  
 200 Let her awhile be secretly kept in,  
 And publish it, that she is dead indeed.  
 Maintain a mourning ostentation,  
 And on your family's old monument,  
 Hang mournful epitaphs, and do all rites  
 205 That appertain unto a burial.  
 LEONATO What shall become of this? What will this do?  
 FRIAR Marry, this, well carried, shall on her behalf  
 Change slander to remorse. That is some good.  
 But not for that dream I on this strange course,  
 210 But on this travail look for greater birth.  
 She—dying, as it must be so maintained,  
 Upon the instant that she was accused—  
 Shall be lamented, pitied, and excused  
 Of every hearer. For it so falls out  
 215 That what we have, we prize not to the worth  
 Whiles we enjoy it, but, being lacked and lost,  
 Why then we rack the value, then we find  
 The virtue that possession would not show us  
 Whiles it was ours. So will it fare with Claudio.  
 220 When he shall hear she died upon his words,  
 Th'idea of her life shall sweetly creep  
 Into his study of imagination,  
 And every lovely organ of her life,  
 Shall come apparelled in more precious habit,  
 225 More moving-delicate, and full of life,  
 Into the eye and prospect of his soul  
 Then when she lived indeed. Then shall he mourn,  
 If ever love had interest in his liver,  
 And wish he had not so accusèd her,  
 230 No, though he thought his accusation true.  
 Let this be so, and doubt not but success  
 Will fashion the event in better shape

4.1.194 **kind** manner

4.1.197 **quit** avenge

4.1.197 **thoroughly** thoroughly

4.1.198 **counsel** advice

4.1.198 **sway** direct

4.1.201 **publish** announce

4.1.202 **ostentation** public show

4.1.203 **monument** tomb

4.1.207 **carried** carried out

4.1.209 **course** of action

4.1.210 **travail** suffering; effort

4.1.214 **falls out** i.e. is usually the case

4.1.215 **prize** value

4.1.215 **to the worth** to its full worth

4.1.216 **enjoy** have

4.1.217 **rack** stretch out (increase our sense of)

4.1.219 **fare** go (turn out)

4.1.222 **study** reflection

4.1.222 **imagination** thought, i.e. memory

4.1.223 **organ** feature

4.1.224 **habit** clothing (appearance)

4.1.226 **prospect** view

4.1.228 **interest in** a stake in

4.1.228 **liver** thought to be the seat of the passions (especially love and sexual desire)

4.1.231 **success** the (successful) course of events

4.1.232 **event** outcome

- Than I can lay it down in likelihood.  
 But if all aim but this be levelled false,  
 235 The supposition of the lady's death  
 Will quench the wonder of her infamy.  
 And if it sort not well, you may conceal her,  
 As best befits her wounded reputation,  
 In some reclusive and religious life,  
 240 Out of all eyes, tongues, minds, and injuries.  
 BENEDICK Signor Leonato, let the Friar advise you.  
 And though you know my inwardness and love  
 Is very much unto the Prince and Claudio,  
 Yet, by mine honour, I will deal in this  
 245 As secretly and justly as your soul  
 Should with your body.  
 LEONATO Being that I flow in grief,  
 The smallest twine may lead me.  
 FRIAR 'Tis well consented. Presently away,  
 250 For to strange sores, strangely they strain the cure.  
*[to Hero]* Come lady, die to live. This wedding day  
 Perhaps is but prolong'd. Have patience and endure.
- Exit [all but Benedick and Beatrice]*
- BENEDICK Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?  
 BEATRICE Yea, and I will weep a while longer.  
 255 BENEDICK I will not desire that.  
 BEATRICE You have no reason, I do it freely.  
 BENEDICK Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wronged.  
 BEATRICE Ah, how much might the man deserve of me that would  
 right her!  
 260 BENEDICK Is there any way to show such friendship?  
 BEATRICE A very even way, but no such friend.  
 BENEDICK May a man do it?  
 BEATRICE It is a man's office, but not yours.  
 BENEDICK I do love nothing in the world so well as you, is not that strange?  
 265 BEATRICE As strange as the thing I know not. It were as possible for me  
 to say, I loved nothing so well as you, but believe me not, and yet I lie not.  
 I confess nothing, nor I deny nothing, I am sorry for my cousin.  
 BENEDICK By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.  
 BEATRICE Do not swear and eat it.  
 270 BENEDICK I will swear by it that you love me, and I will make him eat it  
 that says I love not you.  
 BEATRICE Will you not eat your word?  
 BENEDICK With no sauce that can be devised to it. I protest I love thee.

4.1.263 **not yours** Ellen Terry's Beatrice implied that she did not want Benedick to get involved in a physical altercation for fear of his well-being.

4.1.233 **lay it down** work it out (predict it)

4.1.234 **if . . . false** i.e. if all intentions but this one miscarry

4.1.234 **levelled false** wrongly targeted

4.1.235 **supposition** opinion (belief)

4.1.236 **wonder of** amazement at; speculation about

4.1.237 **sort** turn out

4.1.242 **inwardness** intimacy (close friendship)

4.1.249 **Presently** at once

4.1.250 **to . . . cure** reworking of the proverb 'a desperate disease must have a desperate remedy'

4.1.250 **strange** unusual (extreme or abnormal)

4.1.250 **strain** force

4.1.252 **prolong'd** postponed

4.1.261 **even** direct

4.1.261 **friend** friend; lover

4.1.263 **office** job (duty)

4.1.265 **strange** she changes his sense of 'odd' to 'unfamiliar'

4.1.265 **the thing** picking up on his 'nothing'; could mean 'anything' or something specific (perhaps love or his love?); compare Title

4.1.269 **eat it** eat the sword, i.e. eat the oath (eat your words)

4.1.273 **to** for

4.1.273 **protest** vow (protestation)

- BEATRICE Why then, God forgive me.
- 275 BENEDICK What offence, sweet Beatrice?
- BEATRICE You have stayed me in a happy hour. I was about to protest I loved you.
- BENEDICK And do it with all thy heart.
- BEATRICE I love you with so much of my heart that none is left to
- 280 protest.
- BENEDICK Come, bid me do any thing for thee.
- BEATRICE Kill Claudio.
- BENEDICK Ha! Not for the wide world.
- BEATRICE You kill me to deny it. Farewell.
- 285 BENEDICK Tarry, sweet Beatrice.
- BEATRICE I am gone, though I am here. There is no love in you.—Nay I pray you, let me go.
- BENEDICK Beatrice.
- BEATRICE In faith, I will go.
- 290 BENEDICK We'll be friends first.
- BEATRICE You dare easier be friends with me than fight with mine enemy.
- BENEDICK Is Claudio thine enemy?
- BEATRICE Is 'a not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered,
- 295 scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman? O that I were a man! What, bear her in hand, until they come to take hands, and then with public accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated rancour—O God that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the market place.
- BENEDICK Hear me, Beatrice.
- 300 BEATRICE Talk with a man out at a window—a proper saying!
- BENEDICK Nay, but Beatrice.
- BEATRICE Sweet Hero, she is wronged, she is slandered, she is undone.
- BENEDICK Beat—
- BEATRICE Princes and counties! Surely a princely testimony, a goodly
- 305 count, Count Comfit, a sweet gallant, surely. O that I were a man for his sake! Or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake! But manhood is melted into courtesies, valour into compliment, and men are only turned into tongue, and trim ones too. He is now as valiant as Hercules, that only tells a lie, and swears it. I cannot be a man with
- 310 wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.
- BENEDICK Tarry, good Beatrice. By this hand, I love thee.
- BEATRICE Use it for my love some other way than swearing by it.
- BENEDICK Think you in your soul the Count Claudio hath wronged Hero?
- 315 BEATRICE Yea, as sure as I have a thought, or a soul.

**4.1.282 Kill Claudio** One of the most important and charged moments in the play, this line may be preceded or followed by a significant silence, and can be performed and received by Benedick in many ways. Beatrice may be bitter or desperate, and Benedick's reaction may be shock, laughter, or dismissal.

**4.1.290 We'll . . . first** Benedick may try to kiss Beatrice here.

4.1.276 **stayed me** forestalled me, i.e. prevented me speaking by speaking first

4.1.276 **happy hour** opportune moment

4.1.285 **Tarry** wait or stay

4.1.294 **approved** proved

4.1.295–6 **bear . . . hand** lead her on (delude her)

4.1.297 **uncovered** barefaced

4.1.300 **proper saying** likely story

4.1.302 **undone** ruined

4.1.304 **counties** counts

4.1.304 **princely** i.e. rich or fine, though refers to Don Pedro's part in all this

4.1.304 **testimony** assurance (backing up a story); legal witness

4.1.304 **goodly** fine ('goodly count' in one sense means 'a fine/likely story', as at 4.1.300)

4.1.305 **count** nobleman; story (account); legal charge in an indictment

4.1.305 **Comfit** sweetmeat (candy); compare *Richard III* 3.1.13–14

4.1.307 **courtesies** showy manners or politeness (linked to 'curtsy')

4.1.307 **compliment** etiquette; flattery

4.1.308 **tongue** i.e. talkers (not doers)

4.1.308 **trim** smooth (glib)

4.1.309 **with** by

BENEDICK Enough, I am engaged, I will challenge him. I will kiss your hand, and so I leave you. By this hand, Claudio shall render me a dear account. As you hear of me, so think of me. Go comfort your cousin. I must say she is dead. And so farewell.

## 4.2

Sc. 13 Enter [*the Watch, Dogberry and Verges*] the Constables, Borachio, [*Conrad*] and the [*Sexton, the*] Town clerk in gowns

DOGBERRY Is our whole dissembly appeared?

VERGES O, a stool and a cushion for the Sexton.

[*Sexton sits*]

SEXTON Which be the malefactors?

DOGBERRY Marry, that am I, and my partner.

5 VERGES Nay, that's certain, we have the exhibition to examine.

SEXTON But which are the offenders that are to be examined? Let them come before Master Constable.

DOGBERRY Yea, marry, let them come before me. What is your name, friend?

10 BORACHIO Borachio.

DOGBERRY Pray write down 'Borachio'. [*To Conrad*] Yours, sirrah?

CONRAD I am a gentleman, sir, and my name is Conrad.

DOGBERRY Write down 'Master Gentleman Conrad'. [*To Conrad and Borachio*] Masters, do you serve God?

DELETION

D1 CONRAD, BORACHIO Yea, sir, we hope.

D2 DOGBERRY Write down, that they hope they serve God. And write

D3 'God' first, for God defend but God should go before such villains.

15 Masters, it is proved already that you are little better than false knaves, and it will go near to be thought so shortly. How answer you for yourselves?

CONRAD Marry, sir, we say we are none.

DOGBERRY A marvellous witty fellow, I assure you, but I will go about  
20 with him. Come you hither, sirrah. A word in your ear, sir. I say to you it is thought you are false knaves.

BORACHIO Sir, I say to you we are none.

DOGBERRY Well, stand aside. Fore God they are both in a tale. Have you writ down that they are none?

25 SEXTON Master Constable, you go not the way to examine. You must call forth the Watch that are their accusers.

DOGBERRY Yea, marry, that's the effest way. Let the Watch come forth. Masters, I charge you in the Prince's name accuse these men.

4.1.317 **render** surrender up; declare (give an account)

4.1.317 **dear** costly; extremely strong

4.1.318 **account** payment; justification (explanation); the word also means 'judgement' or 'reckoning' and plays, perhaps unintentionally here, on 'count'

Sc. 13 4.2.0.2 **Sexton** church officer who looks after a church and churchyard, often including bell-ringing and grave-digging (compare *Hamlet* 18.72–3); in small communities they would take on other duties, as here acting as clerk in a legal hearing

4.2.1 **dissembly** malapropism for 'assembly'

4.2.3 **malefactors** wrongdoers; perhaps Dogberry mistakes for 'factors' meaning representatives (of the Prince or the law)

4.2.5 **exhibition** malapropism for 'commission' (authority)

4.2.11 **sirrah** semi-contemptuous form of address to a social inferior

4.2.14.D3 **defend** forbid

4.2.19 **marvellous** extremely

4.2.19 **witty** crafty

4.2.19–20 **go about with** deal with (get the better of)

4.2.23 **Fore** before (by)

4.2.23 **in a tale** in agreement (sticking to the same story)

4.2.25 **the way** i.e. the right way

4.2.27 **effest** quickest; an apparent nonsense malapropism, possibly for 'defest' or 'aptest'; the word 'eftsoons' meaning shortly or in a while appears in *Pericles* 25.243

WATCH 1 This man said, sir, that Don John the Prince's brother, was a  
 30 villain.  
 DOGBERRY Write down Prince John a villain. Why this is flat perjury, to  
 call a prince's brother villain.  
 BORACHIO Master Constable.  
 DOGBERRY Pray thee, fellow, peace, I do not like thy look, I promise  
 35 thee.  
 SEXTON What heard you him say else?  
 WATCH 2 Marry, that he had received a thousand ducats of Don John for  
 accusing the Lady Hero wrongfully.  
 DOGBERRY Flat burglary as ever was committed.  
 40 VERGES Yea, by th'mass that it is.  
 SEXTON What else, fellow?  
 WATCH 1 And that Count Claudio did mean upon his words to disgrace  
 Hero before the whole assembly, and not marry her.  
 DOGBERRY O villain! Thou wilt be condemnd into everlasting  
 45 redemption for this.  
 SEXTON What else?  
 WATCH This is all.  
 SEXTON And this is more, masters, then you can deny. Prince John is  
 this morning secretly stolen away. Hero was in this manner accused, in  
 50 this very manner refused, and upon the grief of this suddenly died.  
 Master Constable, let these men be bound and brought to Leonato's. I  
 will go before and show him their examination.  
 CONSTABLE Come, let them be opinioned.  
 VERGES Let them be in the hands—  
 55 [CONRAD] Off, coxcomb!  
 DOGBERRY God's my life, where's the Sexton? Let him write down the  
 Prince's officer coxcomb. Come, bind them. Thou naughty varlet.  
 CONRAD Away, you are an ass, you are an ass.  
 DOGBERRY Dost thou not suspect my place? Dost thou not suspect my  
 60 years? O that he were here to write me down an ass! But, masters,  
 remember that I am an ass, though it be not written down, yet forget  
 not that I am an ass. No thou villain, thou art full of piety as shall be  
 proved upon thee by good witness. I am a wise fellow, and which is  
 more, an officer, and which is more, a householder, and which is more, as  
 65 pretty a piece of flesh as any is in Messina, and one that knows the law,  
 go to, and a rich fellow enough, go to, and a fellow that hath had losses,  
 and one that hath two gowns, and everything handsome about him.  
 Bring him away. O that I had been writ down an ass! *Exit*

**4.2.54 in the hands** Verges  
 moves to bind Conrad and  
 may go about the task in a  
 comically incompetent way,  
 provoking a reaction from  
 Conrad.

4.2.31 **flat** downright

4.2.39 **burglary** perhaps the proper sense, accusing them of  
 stealing Don John's money rather than him giving it, though  
 perhaps also a malapropism for 'villainy' or 'perjury'

4.2.42 **upon** as a result of

4.2.45 **redemption** malapropism for 'damnation' or perhaps  
 'perdition'

4.2.50 **refused** rejected; disowned

4.2.53 **opinioned** he means 'pinioned' (tied or chained up)

4.2.54 **Let . . . hands** i.e. let their hands be bound

4.2.55 **coxcomb** fool

4.2.57 **naughty** wicked

4.2.59 **suspect** malapropism for 'respect'

4.2.59 **place** position (authority)

4.2.60 **years** age

4.2.62 **piety** he means 'impiety'

4.2.64 **householder** owner of property

4.2.66 **go to** intensifying expression with several meanings, often  
 'away with you' or the like (it can also be a literal command to  
 move), here with an added sense of something like 'you'd better  
 believe it'

4.2.66 **had losses** has lost money, and yet can still afford two  
 gowns (cloaks)

4.2.67 **handsome** fine



## 5.1

Sc. 14 Enter Leonato and his brother

BROTHER If you go on thus, you will kill yourself, And 'tis not wisdom  
thus to second grief  
Against your self.

LEONATO I pray thee cease thy counsel,  
Which falls into mine ears as profitless,  
5 As water in a sieve. Give not me counsel,  
Nor let no comforter delight mine ear  
But such a one whose wrongs do suit with mine.  
Bring me a father that so loved his child,  
Whose joy of her is overwhelmed like mine,  
10 And bid him speak of patience,  
Measure his woe the length and breadth of mine,  
And let it answer every strain for strain,  
As thus for thus, and such a grief for such,  
In every lineament, branch, shape, and form.  
15 If such a one will smile and stroke his beard,  
And sorrow, wag, cry 'hem' when he should groan,  
Patch grief with proverbs, make misfortune drunk  
With candle-wasters, bring him yet to me,  
And I of him will gather patience.  
20 But there is no such man, for brother, men  
Can counsel, and speak comfort to that grief,  
Which they themselves not feel, but tasting it  
Their counsel turns to passion, which before  
Would give preceptual medicine to rage,  
25 Fetter strong madness in a silken thread,  
Charm ache with air and agony with words.  
No, no, 'tis all men's office, to speak patience  
To those that wring under the load of sorrow,  
But no man's virtue nor sufficiency  
30 To be so moral, when he shall endure  
The like himself. Therefore give me no counsel.  
My griefs cry louder than advertisement.

BROTHER Therein do men from children nothing differ.

LEONATO I pray thee peace, I will be flesh and blood,  
35 For there was never yet philosopher  
That could endure the toothache patiently,  
However they have writ the style of gods,  
And made a pish at chance and sufferance.

Sc. 14 5.1.2 second assist (like a 'second' in a duel)

5.1.3 counsel advice

5.1.7 suit match (compare)

5.1.12 answer correspond to

5.1.12 strain pang; trait; musical phrase, as with two melodies  
answering each other

5.1.14 lineament feature; line

5.1.15–16 stroke . . . hem' to stroke the beard and clear the throat  
(ahem) were mocking impersonations of someone about to make  
a dull speech

5.1.16 wag act foolishly

5.1.17 Patch patch up; cover over

5.1.18 candle-wasters i.e. those who stay up all night drinking;  
compare *Antony and Cleopatra* 4.4–5

5.1.18 yet then; even now

Sc. 14 5.1.0 Enter . . .

brother Leonato may enter  
visibly distraught or very  
depressed. His brother may  
be comforting him physically  
as they enter the stage.

5.1.19 of from

5.1.24 preceptual made of precepts (wise sayings)

5.1.25 Fetter bind (chain up)

5.1.26 air breath (words; compare 5.2.35–6); insubstantial nothings

5.1.27 office duty, i.e. all men take it upon themselves

5.1.28 wring writhe (as if in pain)

5.1.29 sufficiency ability

5.1.31 like same

5.1.32 advertisement good advice

5.1.37 writ the style signed with (claimed) the titles; written  
(expressed themselves) in the manner of

5.1.38 pish i.e. dismissive scoff

5.1.38 chance misfortune

5.1.38 sufferance suffering; endurance of pain (assuming it is  
easy); fate

- BROTHER Yet bend not all the harm upon yourself.  
 40 Make those that do offend you suffer too.  
 LEONATO There thou speak'st reason, nay I will do so.  
 My soul doth tell me Hero is belied,  
 And that shall Claudio know, so shall the Prince,  
 And all of them that thus dishonour her.  
*Enter Prince and Claudio*
- 45 BROTHER Here comes the Prince and Claudio hastily.  
 PRINCE Good e'en, good e'en.  
 CLAUDIO Good day to both of you.  
 LEONATO Hear you, my Lords?  
 PRINCE We have some haste, Leonato.  
 LEONATO Some haste, my lord! Well, fare you well, my lord.  
 Are you so hasty now? Well, all is one.
- 50 PRINCE Nay, do not quarrel with us, good old man.  
 BROTHER If he could right himself with quarrelling,  
 Some of us would lie low.  
 CLAUDIO Who wrongs him?  
 LEONATO Marry, thou dost wrong me, thou dissembler, thou.  
 Nay, never lay thy hand upon thy sword,  
 55 I fear thee not.  
 CLAUDIO Marry, beshrew my hand  
 If it should give your age such cause of fear.  
 In faith my hand meant nothing to my sword.  
 LEONATO Tush, tush, man, never fleer and jest at me.  
 I speak not like a dotard, nor a fool,  
 60 As under privilege of age to brag  
 What I have done being young, or what would do,  
 Were I not old. Know Claudio to thy head,  
 Thou hast so wronged mine innocent child and me,  
 That I am forced to lay my reverence by,  
 65 And with grey hairs and bruise of many days  
 Do challenge thee to trial of a man.  
 I say thou hast belied mine innocent child.  
 Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart,  
 And she lies buried with her ancestors.  
 70 O, in a tomb where never scandal slept  
 Save this of hers, framed by thy villany.  
 CLAUDIO My villany?  
 LEONATO Thine, Claudio, thine I say.  
 PRINCE You say not right old man.  
 LEONATO My Lord, my Lord,  
 I'll prove it on his body if he dare,

## 5.1.54 never . . . sword

Leonato may threaten Claudio physically or make a threatening gesture. Claudio may subconsciously respond by putting his hand to his sword or, alternatively, Leonato may be imagining Claudio's reaction.

5.1.39 **bend** aim (turn)5.1.46 **e'en** even (evening), which covered the time after noon (Claudio follows up with 'good day')5.1.49 **all is one** it's all one and the same (it doesn't matter)5.1.52 **lie low** i.e. end up dead5.1.53 **dissembler** deceiver; hypocrite5.1.54 **never** i.e. don't5.1.55 **beshrew** curse5.1.58 **fleer** mock5.1.59 **dotard** senile old fool5.1.60 **under . . . age** i.e. given indulgence to ramble on because of old age5.1.62 **head** face5.1.64 **reverence** respected state (of age)5.1.64 **by** aside5.1.65 **bruise** wear and tear5.1.66 **trial . . . man** i.e. a duel5.1.71 **Save** except5.1.71 **framed** created; plotted

75 Despite his nice fence, and his active practice,  
 His May of youth and bloom of lustihood.  
 CLAUDIO Away, I will not have to do with you.  
 LEONATO Canst thou so doff me? Thou hast killed my child.  
 If thou kill'st me, boy, thou shalt kill a man.  
 80 BROTHER He shall kill two of us, and men indeed,  
 But that's no matter, let him kill one first.  
 Win me and wear me. Let him answer me.  
 Come follow me, boy, come, sir boy, come follow me,  
 Sir boy, I'll whip you from your foining fence.  
 85 Nay, as I am a gentleman I, will.  
 LEONATO Brother  
 BROTHER Content yourself. God knows, I loved my niece,  
 And she is dead, slandered to death by villains  
 That dare as well answer a man indeed  
 90 As I dare take a serpent by the tongue.  
 Boyes, apes, braggarts, jacks, milksops!  
 LEONATO Brother Anthony—  
 BROTHER Hold you content. What man, I know them, yea,  
 And what they weigh, even to the utmost scruple.  
 95 Scambling, outfacing, fashion-monging boys  
 That lie, and cog, and flout, deprave, and slander,  
 Go anticly, and show an outward hideousness,  
 And speak of half a dozen dangerous words,  
 How they might hurt their enemies, if they durst,  
 100 And this is all.  
 LEONATO But, brother Anthony—  
 BROTHER Come, 'tis no matter,  
 Do not you meddle, let me deal in this.  
 PRINCE Gentlemen both, we will not wake your patience.  
 My heart is sorry for your daughter's death,  
 105 But on my honour she was charged with nothing  
 But what was true, and very full of proof.  
 LEONATO My Lord, my Lord—  
 PRINCE I will not hear you.  
 LEONATO No? Come, brother, away. I will be heard.  
 BROTHER And shall, or some of us will smart for it.

5.1.82 Let . . . me Leonato's brother, who is clearly quite old, may be played for humour here: either he cannot properly hear Leonato's protestations, or his feebleness makes his physical threats and insults seem particularly toothless.

[Exeunt Leonato and Antonio [his brother]]

*Enter Benedick*

110 PRINCE See, see, here comes the man we went to seek.  
CLAUDIO Now, Signor, what news?  
BENEDICK [*to Prince*] Good day, my lord.

- 5.1.75 **nice** artful (adept)  
5.1.75 **fence** fencing skill  
5.1.76 **lustihood** youthful vigour  
5.1.78 **doff** put off (brush aside)  
5.1.82 **Win ... me** i.e. if you beat me then you can brag about it  
(‘wear’ like a trophy or sign of victory)  
5.1.82 **answer** give his answer to the challenge; fight (face up to)  
5.1.84 **foining** thrusting  
5.1.89 **man indeed** i.e. a real man  
5.1.91 **apes** imitators (of men); fools  
5.1.91 **jacks** rogues  
5.1.91 **millsops** cowards  
5.1.94 **scruple** tiny amount  
5.1.95 **Scambling** uncouth  
5.1.95 **outfacing** confrontational; bullying  
5.1.95 **fashion-monging** i.e. fashion victims (vain and shallow)  
5.1.96 **cog** cheat  
5.1.96 **flout** insult  
5.1.96 **deprave** defame  
5.1.97 **Go** dress; go about  
5.1.97 **antictly** grotesquely (like jesters or fools)  
5.1.97 **show ... hideousness** i.e. try to look intimidating  
5.1.98 **dangerous** threatening  
5.1.99 **durst** dared (i.e. if their enemies dared face them)  
5.1.103 **wake** disturb

- PRINCE Welcome, Signor. You are almost come to part almost a fray.
- CLAUDIO We had liked to have had our two noses snapped off with two  
 115 old men without teeth.
- PRINCE Leonato and his brother. What thinkest thou? Had we fought, I doubt we should have been too young for them.
- BENEDICK In a false quarrel there is no true valour. I came to seek you both.
- 120 CLAUDIO We have been up and down to seek thee, for we are high proof melancholy, and would fain have it beaten away. Wilt thou use thy wit?
- BENEDICK It is in my scabbard, shall I draw it?
- PRINCE Dost thou wear thy wit by thy side?
- 125 CLAUDIO Never any did so, though very many have been beside their wit. I will bid thee draw, as we do the minstrels, draw to pleasure us.
- PRINCE As I am an honest man he looks pale. Art thou sick, or angry?
- CLAUDIO What, courage, man. What though care killed a cat, thou hast mettle enough in thee to kill care.
- 130 BENEDICK Sir, I shall meet your wit in the career and you charge it against me. I pray you choose another subject.
- CLAUDIO Nay then, give him another staff. This last was broke cross.
- PRINCE By this light, he changes more and more. I think he be angry indeed.
- 135 CLAUDIO If he be, he knows how to turn his girdle.
- BENEDICK [*aside to Claudio*] Shall I speak a word in your ear?
- CLAUDIO God bless me from a challenge.
- BENEDICK You are a villain. I jest not. I will make it good how you dare, with what you dare, and when you dare. Do me right, or I will protest  
 140 your cowardice. You have killed a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you. Let me hear from you.
- CLAUDIO Well, I will meet you, so I may have good cheer.
- PRINCE What, a feast, a feast?
- CLAUDIO I'faith, I thank him he hath bid me to a calf's head and a  
 145 capon, the which if I do not carve most curiously, say my knife's naught. Shall I not find a woodcock too?

**5.1.138 BENEDICK**  
 Benedick's posture is often stiff, formal, or even aloof in this scene.

5.1.113 **almost** just too late  
 5.1.113 **almost a fray** what was nearly a fight  
 5.1.114 **had liked** were likely  
 5.1.114 **with** by  
 5.1.117 **doubt** fear; suspect  
 5.1.120–1 **high proof** in the highest degree  
 5.1.121 **fain** gladly  
 5.1.121 **beaten away** he means driven away, though Benedick picks up on the sense of a sword-point being beaten away in a fight  
 5.1.123 **draw** i.e. as 'minstrels' or musicians would draw an instrument from a case or a bow across strings  
 5.1.126 **pleasure** please; entertain  
 5.1.128 **care** worry; sorrow  
 5.1.128 **care . . . cat** proverbial  
 5.1.129 **mettle** spirit  
 5.1.130 **career** gallop (another jousting metaphor as at 2.1.110 and 2.3.188)  
 5.1.132 **staff** lance  
 5.1.132 **cross** i.e. across the middle rather than lengthwise from a direct hit, a sign of clumsiness or fear; the meaning 'angry' or in anger is possible as Claudio's sense of Benedick's seriousness is hard to gauge. The whole exchange from Benedick's entrance develops the theme of duelling, and while Claudio disingenuously treats it all as a game of wits, he seems to know

a challenge is coming; the fact that his jokes over the next few lines accuse Benedick of cowardice in combat seems pointedly defensive.

5.1.133 **light** i.e. daylight, or God's light; a mild oath  
 5.1.133 **changes** i.e. turns pale  
 5.1.135 **turn . . . girdle** proverbial, meaning to turn one's belt (girdle) around so the buckle and sword are at the back, signifying the decision to 'put up with' an insult rather than challenge it (to 'put up' a sword means to sheathe it, which could have connotations of backing down)  
 5.1.137 **bless** protect  
 5.1.138 **make . . . good** i.e. my word  
 5.1.139 **Do . . . right** i.e. accept the challenge  
 5.1.139 **protest** proclaim  
 5.1.142 **so** because; provided  
 5.1.142 **cheer** entertainment; mirth or joy (Don Pedro picks up on the sense of 'fare', i.e. food and drink)  
 5.1.144 **calf's head** typical fare at a feast, but also means 'fool'  
 5.1.145 **capon** castrated cockerels fattened for eating, considered both stupid and cowardly  
 5.1.145 **curiously** skilfully  
 5.1.145 **say** he will say; tell the world (because I'll easily beat him)  
 5.1.145 **naught** useless  
 5.1.146 **woodcock** known as a stupid, easily caught bird

BENEDICK Sir, your wit ambles well, it goes easily.

PRINCE I'll tell thee how Beatrice praised thy wit the other day. I said thou hadst a fine wit. 'True,' said she, 'a fine little one.' 'No,' said I, 'a great wit.' 'Right,' says she, 'a great gross one.' 'Nay,' said I, 'a good wit.' 'Just,' said she, 'it hurts nobody.' 'Nay,' said I, 'the gentleman is wise.' 'Certain,' said she, 'a wise gentleman.' 'Nay,' said I, 'he hath the tongues.' 'That I believe,' said she, 'for he swore a thing to me on Monday night which he forswore on Tuesday morning. There's a double tongue, there's two tongues.' Thus did she an hour together trans-shape thy particular virtues, yet at last she concluded with a sigh, thou wast the properest man in Italy.

CLAUDIO For the which she wept heartily and said she cared not.

PRINCE Yea, that she did. But yet for all that, an if she did not hate him deadly, she would love him dearly. The old man's daughter told us all.

CLAUDIO All, all. And, moreover, God saw him when he was hid in the garden.

PRINCE But when shall we set the savage bull's horns on the sensible Benedick's head?

CLAUDIO Yea, and text underneath, 'Here dwells Benedick the married man.'

BENEDICK Fare you well, boy. You know my mind. I will leave you now to your gossip-like humour. You break jests as braggarts do their blades, which God be thanked, hurt not. *[To Prince]* My lord, for your many courtesies I thank you. I must discontinue your company. Your brother the bastard is fled from Messina. You have among you killed a sweet and innocent lady. For my Lord Lackbeard there, he and I shall meet, and till then peace be with him. *[Exit]*

PRINCE He is in earnest.

CLAUDIO In most profound earnest, and, I'll warrant you, for the love of Beatrice.

PRINCE And hath challenged thee.

CLAUDIO Most sincerely.

PRINCE What a pretty thing man is, when he goes in his doublet and hose, and leaves off his wit!

CLAUDIO He is then a giant to an ape, but then is an ape a doctor to such a man.

PRINCE But soft, you, let me be. Pluck up, my heart, and be sad. Did he not say my brother was fled?

5.1.147 **ambles** goes at a slow pace (of a horse moving)

5.1.147 **goes easily** doesn't exert itself; is easily gone and forgotten

5.1.148 **wit** plays on the secondary sense of 'penis'

5.1.149 **fine** excellent; small

5.1.150 **gross** big; bad (poor); vile

5.1.152 **wise gentleman** perhaps ironic, with connotations of being an old fool

5.1.152 **hath . . . tongues** i.e. he speaks other languages

5.1.154 **double** deceitful

5.1.155 **trans-shape** transmute (alter the shape of)

5.1.156 **properest** best; most handsome

5.1.159 **an if** if

5.1.160 **old . . . daughter** i.e. Hero

5.1.161–2 **God . . . garden** allusion to Adam's vain attempt, after his transgression, to hide from God (Genesis 3:8), hinting at Benedick's overhearing in 2.3

5.1.163–6 **But . . . man** compare 1.1.191–6

5.1.168 **gossip** gossip old woman

5.1.168 **humour** mood

5.1.168 **break jests** crack jokes, though again with the idea of a weapon breaking ineffectually (compare 2.1.110)

5.1.168 **braggarts . . . blades** i.e. breaking their own blades to make it look as though they've been in a fight

5.1.172 **Lackbeard** compare note to 2.1.23

5.1.172 **meet** i.e. to fight

5.1.174 **in earnest** serious

5.1.179 **pretty** fine; naive

5.1.179 **goes** goes around (dresses)

5.1.180 **leaves off** does not wear (i.e. doesn't use)

5.1.181 **giant** i.e. hero or colossus

5.1.181 **to** in the eyes of

5.1.181 **doctor** learned man

5.1.183 **soft, you** slow down or be quiet a moment

5.1.183 **Pluck up** rouse up (pull yourself together)

5.1.183 **sad** serious

*[Enter Constables [Dogberry and Verges, the Watch], Conrad, and Borachio]*

185 DOGBERRY Come you, sir, if justice cannot tame you, she shall ne'er weigh more reasons in her balance. Nay, an you be a cursing hypocrite once, you must be looked to.

PRINCE How now, two of my brother's men bound? Borachio one.

CLAUDIO Hearken after their offence, my lord.

190 PRINCE Officers, what offence have these men done?

DOGBERRY Marry, sir, they have committed false report, moreover they have spoken untruths, secondarily they are slanders, sixth and lastly, they have belied a lady, thirdly they have verified unjust things, and to conclude, they are lying knaves.

195 PRINCE First I ask thee what they have done, thirdly I ask thee what's their offence, sixth and lastly why they are committed, and to conclude, what you lay to their charge.

CLAUDIO Rightly reasoned, and in his own division, and by my troth there's one meaning well-suited.

200 PRINCE *[to Conrad and Borachio]* Who have you offended, masters, that you are thus bound to your answer? This learned Constable is too cunning to be understood. What's your offence?

BORACHIO Sweet Prince, let me go no farther to mine answer. Do you hear me, and let this Count kill me. I have deceived even your very eyes. What your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light, who in the night overheard me confessing to this man how Don John your brother incensed me to slander the Lady Hero, how you were brought into the orchard and saw me court Margaret in Hero's garments, how you disgraced her when you should marry her. My villany they have upon record, which I had rather seal with my death, than repeat over to my shame. The lady is dead upon mine and my master's false accusation, and briefly, I desire nothing but the reward of a villain.

PRINCE *[to Claudio]* Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

215 CLAUDIO I have drunk poison whiles he uttered it.

PRINCE *[to Borachio]* But did my brother set thee on to this?

BORACHIO Yea, and paid me richly for the practice of it.

PRINCE He is composed and framed of treachery  
And fled he is upon this villany.

220 CLAUDIO Sweet Hero, now thy image doth appear  
In the rare semblance that I loved it first.

5.1.185 Come you The Prince and Claudio may be especially irreverent or dismissive of Dogberry at first.

5.1.203 BORACHIO Borachio is often portrayed as genuinely remorseful and in some performances he delivers this speech while kneeling and begging.

5.1.186 **reasons** i.e. judgements, though the word would have sounded like 'raisins' in Elizabethan pronunciation, producing a ridiculous comic image that Dogberry does not intend

5.1.186 **balance** scales (which the figure of Justice carries in one hand, a sword in the other)

5.1.187 **once** once and for all

5.1.189 **Hearken after** enquire into

5.1.192 **slanders** he means 'slanderers'

5.1.193 **verified** confirmed; he means 'affirmed' or 'sworn' or similar

5.1.198 **in . . . division** in its proper order (in a logical argument); according to Dogberry's logic

5.1.199 **one . . . suited** i.e. one notion dressed up six ways (well set out)

5.1.201 **bound . . . answer** required to answer questions; on the way to your trial; chained up for your trial

5.1.207 **incensed** urged

5.1.210 **seal** i.e. approve, as with the written confession being stamped with an official seal; the senses of 'conclude' and 'pay for' are also present

5.1.214 **iron . . . blood** probably like a dagger through your flesh/heart, though the possible idea of molten iron, as with mercury, as something alien and unwholesome to the body (in contrast to blood), coupled with the talk of poison in the next line, recalls *Hamlet* 5.63–9

5.1.217 **practice** execution (carrying out)

5.1.221 **rare** uncommon; precious; beautiful

5.1.221 **semblance** likeness

DOGBERRY Come, bring away the plaintiffs. By this time our Sexton hath reformed Signor Leonato of the matter. And, masters, do not forget to specify when time and place shall serve, that I am an ass.

225 VERGES Here, here comes Master Signor Leonato, and the Sexton too.

*Enter Leonato, [Antonio] his brother, and the Sexton*

LEONATO Which is the villain? Let me see his eyes,  
That when I note another man like him,  
I may avoid him. Which of these is he?

BORACHIO If you would know your wronger, look on me.

230 LEONATO Art thou the slave that with thy breath hast killed  
Mine innocent child?

BORACHIO Yea, even I alone.

LEONATO No, not so, villain, thou beliest thyself.

Here stand a pair of honourable men,

A third is fled that had a hand in it.

235 I thank you, Princes, for my daughter's death.

Record it with your high and worthy deeds.

'Twas bravely done, if you bethink you of it.

CLAUDIO I know not how to pray your patience,

Yet I must speak. Choose your revenge yourself,

240 Impose me to what penance your invention

Can lay upon my sin. Yet sinned I not

But in mistaking.

PRINCE By my soul, nor I,

And yet to satisfy this good old man,

I would bend under any heavy weight

245 That he'll enjoin me to.

LEONATO I cannot bid you bid my daughter live—

That were impossible—but I pray you both,

Possess the people in Messina here

How innocent she died, and if your love

250 Can labour aught in sad invention,

Hang her an epitaph upon her tomb

And sing it to her bones, sing it tonight.

Tomorrow morning come you to my house,

And since you could not be my son-in-law,

255 Be yet my nephew: my brother hath a daughter,

Almost the copy of my child that's dead,

And she alone is heir to both of us.

Give her the right you should have giv'n her cousin,

And so dies my revenge.

CLAUDIO O noble sir!

260 Your overkindness doth wring tears from me.

I do embrace your offer and dispose,

For henceforth of poor Claudio.

LEONATO Tomorrow then I will expect your coming.

Tonight I take my leave. This naughty man

5.1.222 plaintiffs malapropism for 'defendants'

5.1.223 reformed he means 'informed'

5.1.230 breath i.e. words

5.1.237 bravely courageously; worthily (excellently)

5.1.240 Impose subject

5.1.240 invention imagination

5.1.248 Possess inform

5.1.250 aught at all

5.1.250 sad serious; sorrowful

5.1.250 invention inventiveness (creativity)

5.1.258 right i.e. proper treatment, punning on 'rite' (of marriage)

5.1.261 dispose you may dispose; I dispose, i.e. I put myself last

5.1.264 naughty wicked



265 Shall face to face be brought to Margaret,  
 Who I believe was packed in all this wrong,  
 Hired to it by your brother.

BORACHIO No, by my soul, she was not,  
 Nor knew not what she did when she spoke to me,  
 But always hath been just and virtuous,  
 270 In anything that I do know by her.

DOGBERRY [*to Leonato*] Moreover, sir, which indeed is not under white  
 and black, this plaintiff here, the offender, did call me ass. I beseech  
 you let it be remembered in his punishment. And also the Watch heard  
 them talk of one Deformed. They say he wears a key in his ear and a  
 275 lock hanging by it, and borrows money in God's name, the which he hath  
 used so long, and never paid that now men grow hard-hearted and will  
 lend nothing for God's sake. Pray you examine him upon that point.

LEONATO I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

DOGBERRY Your worship speaks like a most thankful and reverend  
 280 youth, and I praise God for you.

LEONATO [*giving him money*] There's for thy pains.

DOGBERRY God save the foundation.

LEONATO Go. I discharge thee of thy prisoner, and I thank thee.

DOGBERRY I leave an arrant knave with your worship, which I beseech  
 285 your worship to correct yourself, for the example of others. God keep  
 your worship, I wish your worship well. God restore you to health. I  
 humbly give you leave to depart, and if a merry meeting may be wished,  
 God prohibit it. Come, neighbour. [*Exit Dogberry and Verges*]

LEONATO Until tomorrow morning, lords, farewell.

290 BROTHER Farewell, my lords. We look for you tomorrow.

PRINCE We will not fail.

CLAUDIO Tonight I'll mourn with Hero.

LEONATO [*to the Watch*] Bring you these fellows on,—we'll talk with  
 Margaret,  
 How her acquaintance grew with this lewd fellow. *Exeunt*

## 5.2

Sc. 15 *Enter Benedick and Margaret*

BENEDICK Pray thee, sweet Mistress Margaret, deserve well at my  
 hands by helping me to the speech of Beatrice.

MARGARET Will you then write me a sonnet in praise of my beauty?

BENEDICK In so high a style, Margaret, that no man living shall come  
 5 over it, for in most comely truth, thou deservest it.

Sc. 15 5.2.3 Will . . .  
 beauty? If the flirtation  
 between Benedick and  
 Margaret from 2.1 has been  
 retained, this scene offers a  
 way for Benedick to curb any  
 flirtatious behaviour and  
 behave most properly towards  
 Margaret to demonstrate his  
 change of heart.

5.1.266 **packed in** in on (as an accomplice)

5.1.271–2 **under . . . black** i.e. in writing

5.1.272 **plaintiff** i.e. defendant

5.1.274–5 **Deformed** . . . it Dogberry's embellished misunder-  
 standing of the lovelock mentioned at 3.3.130–1

5.1.275 **borrows** . . . **name** beggars invoked the biblical equation  
 of almsgiving with lending to God (Proverbs 19:17)

5.1.276 **used** made a habit of

5.1.276 **paid** repaid

5.1.279 **reverend** i.e. wise and respected (reserved typically for  
 elders, not youths)

5.1.282 **God . . . foundation** well-known phrase used by beggars  
 receiving alms, typically outside churches (Dogberry has just  
 decried the practice in 'Deformed')

5.1.284 **arrant** downright

5.1.284 **which** probably means 'whom'

5.1.287 **give** malapropism for 'ask'

5.1.287 **leave** permission

5.1.288 **prohibit** he means 'permit'

5.1.290 **look for** expect

5.1.293 **grew** came about; developed

5.1.293 **lewd** wicked

Sc. 15 5.2.1 at . . . **hands** of me

5.2.2 **to . . . of** to speak with

5.2.4 **high** lofty, punning on 'tall'

5.2.4 **style** punning on 'stile', something you climb over

5.2.4–5 **come over** exceed; climb over

5.2.5 **comely** pleasing; proper

MARGARET To have no man come over me—why, shall I always keep  
below stairs.

BENEDICK Thy wit is as quick as the greyhound's mouth, it catches.

MARGARET And yours as blunt as the fencer's foils, which hit but hurt  
10 not.

BENEDICK A most manly wit, Margaret, it will not hurt a woman. And  
so, I pray thee, call Beatrice. I give thee the bucklers.

MARGARET Give us the swords, we have bucklers of our own.

BENEDICK If you use them, Margaret, you must put in the pikes with a  
15 vice—and they are dangerous weapons for maids.

MARGARET Well, I will call Beatrice to you, who I think hath legs.

*Exit Margaret*

BENEDICK And therefore will come.

BENEDICK  The god of love That sits a-bove, And knows me, and knows me, How pit - i - full I de - serve—

Snatch from the ballad 'The  
God of Love' (tune:  
'Turkeylony'):  
editorial reconstruction.

The god of love  
That sits above,  
20 And knows me, and knows me,  
How pitifull I deserve—

I mean in singing; but in loving, Leander the good swimmer, Troilus the  
first employer of panders, and a whole book full of these quondam  
carpet-mongers whose names yet run smoothly in the even road of a  
25 blank verse, why they were never so truly turned over and over as my  
poor self in love. Marry, I cannot show it in rhyme. I have tried, I can  
find out no rhyme to 'lady' but 'baby', an innocent rhyme; for 'scorn',  
'horn', a hard rhyme; for 'school', 'fool', a babbling rhyme. Very ominous  
endings. No, I was not born under a rhyming planet, nor I cannot woo  
30 in festival terms. Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I called thee?

*Enter Beatrice*

BEATRICE Yea, Signor, and depart when you bid me.

BENEDICK O, stay but till then.

5.2.6 **come over** i.e. sexually mount (the sense of 'come' as  
'ejaculate' was not current at this time)

5.2.7 **below stairs** stay unmarried in the servants' lodgings

5.2.8 **catches** seizes quickly

5.2.9 **foils** blunted swords

5.2.12 **give** ... **bucklers** surrender; bucklers were small, round  
shields used with swords for defence (compare 1 *Henry IV*  
1.3.228); the screw-in spikes in their centres initiates a string of  
sexual wordplay

5.2.13 **swords** innuendo for 'penises'

5.2.13 **bucklers** possibly hymens, vulvas, or thighs (seen as  
defending virginity); vaginas (a buckler having a central hole  
made to receive a screw-in spike)

5.2.14 **pikes** spikes

5.2.15 **vice** screw (possibly also punning on 'sin' and the idea of  
legs clamped around the body like a vice holding an object)

5.2.15 **maids** virgins

5.2.16 **hath legs** can move, and will come; possibly continuing to  
pun on either the sense of closing legs to defend against sexual  
advances, or the opposite

5.2.17 **come** come when called; yield

5.2.18–21 **The ... deserve** lyrics to a popular Elizabethan song by  
William Elderton

5.2.21 **How ... deserve** how much pity I deserve; how badly  
undeserving I am (this is the sense he applies to his singing)

5.2.22 **Leander ... swimmer** ironic; see note to 1.1.0.1

5.2.22–3 **Troilus ... panders** another lover of classical fame,  
whose tale of betrayal and heartbreak at the hands of his lover,  
Cressida, was enshrined in English in Chaucer's epic poem;  
Cressida's uncle, Pandarus, brought them together, acting in  
Chaucer as in Shakespeare as the archetypal go-between after  
whom all panders are named

5.2.23 **panders** go-betweens (pimps)

5.2.23 **quondam** former (erstwhile)

5.2.24 **carpet-mongers** ladies' men or bedroom warriors  
(frequenters of carpeted boudoirs); compare *Richard III* 1.1.9–13

5.2.27 **innocent** childish; foolish

5.2.28 **horn** cuckold's horn; penis

5.2.28 **hard** poor; harsh or tough; erect

5.2.28 **babbling** i.e. nonsense, though suggests the baby talk or  
infant babble of the children of the 'fool' (the cuckolded old man)  
going to school, as well as the fool's own babble

5.2.29 **endings** rhyme endings; consequences (of falling in love)

5.2.30 **festival** light-hearted (befitting a holiday)

BEATRICE 'Then' is spoken. Fare you well now. And yet ere I go, let me go with that I came, which is with knowing what hath passed between you and Claudio.

35 BENEDICK Only foul words, and thereupon I will kiss thee.

BEATRICE Foul words is but foul wind, and foul wind is but foul breath, and foul breath is noisome, therefore I will depart unknissed.

BENEDICK Thou hast frightened the word out of his right sense, so forcible is thy wit. But I must tell thee plainly, Claudio undergoes my challenge, and either I must shortly hear from him or I will subscribe him a coward. And I pray thee now tell me, for which of my bad parts didst thou first fall in love with me?

BEATRICE For them all together, which maintain so politic a state of evil that they will not admit any good part to intermingle with them. But for which of my good parts did you first suffer love for me?

BENEDICK Suffer love! A good epithet. I do suffer love indeed, for I love thee against my will.

BEATRICE In spite of your heart, I think. Alas, poor heart, if you spite it for my sake, I will spite it for yours, for I will never love that which my friend hates.

BENEDICK Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably.

BEATRICE It appears not in this confession. There's not one wise man among twenty that will praise himself.

55 BENEDICK An old, an old instance, Beatrice, that lived in the time of good neighbours. If a man do not erect in this age his own tomb ere he dies, he shall live no longer in monument than the bell rings, and the widow weeps.

BEATRICE And how long is that, think you?

60 BENEDICK Question—why an hour in clamour and a quarter in rheum. Therefore is it most expedient for the wise, if Don Worm (his conscience) find no impediment to the contrary, to be the trumpet of his own virtues, as I am to myself. So much for praising myself, who, I myself will bear witness, is praiseworthy. And now, tell me, how doth your cousin?

BEATRICE Very ill.

BENEDICK And how do you?

BEATRICE Very ill too.

BENEDICK Serve God, love me, and mend. There will I leave you too, for here comes one in haste.

*Enter Ursula*

5.2.40 Claudio . . . challenge Beatrice and Benedick may kiss once or repeatedly over the remainder of the scene.

5.2.38 **noisome** noxious

5.2.39 **his** its

5.2.40 **undergoes** has been made to face (has received)

5.2.41 **subscribe** proclaim (often in writing above a signature)

5.2.42 **parts** qualities

5.2.44 **politic** wily; well-run

5.2.46 **suffer** experience; grudgingly allow (the sense Benedick picks up on, with the sense of 'feel pain or anguish' in the background)

5.2.47 **epithet** expression

5.2.51 **friend** lover

5.2.53 **in** by

5.2.53 **confession** statement

5.2.53–4 **There's . . . himself** i.e. those with true wisdom wouldn't praise themselves for having it; compare *As You Like It* 5.1.26–30

5.2.55 **instance** argument

5.2.55–6 **lived . . . neighbours** compare 'He has ill neighbours that is fain to praise himself' (proverbial); Benedick suggests those days are gone and people must praise themselves

5.2.57 **monument** memorial

5.2.60 **Question** good question; the question is put—here is the answer

5.2.60 **clamour** loud noise (of the bells)

5.2.60 **rheum** tears (widows in literature were notorious for moving on quickly after their husbands' deaths, as with Chaucer's Wife of Bath)

5.2.61 **Don Worm** conscience was imagined in the Bible as a worm boring into the soul (Mark 9:46); compare *Richard III* 1.3.220

5.2.66 **ill** badly; unwell

5.2.69 **leave you** i.e. break off this moment (as opposed to physically depart)

URSULA Madam, you must come to your uncle. Yonder's old coil at home. It is proved my Lady Hero hath been falsely accused, the Prince and Claudio mightily abused, and Don John is the author of all, who is fled and gone. Will you come presently?

75 BEATRICE Will you go hear this news, Signor?

BENEDICK I will live in thy heart, die in thy lap, and be buried in thy eyes. And, moreover, I will go with thee to thy uncle's. *[Exeunt]*

## 5.3

Sc. 16 *Enter Claudio, [Don Pedro the] Prince, and three or four with tapers*

CLAUDIO Is this the monument of Leonato?

LORD It is my Lord. *Epitaph.*

Done to death by slanderous tongues,

Was the Hero that here lies:

5 Death in guerdon of her wrongs,

Gives her fame which never dies:

So the life that died with shame,

Lives in death with glorious fame.

Hang thou there upon the tomb,

10 Praising her when I am dumb.

CLAUDIO Now music sound, and sing your solemn hymn.

*Song*

Pardon goddess of the night,

Those that slew thy virgin knight,

For the which with songs of woe,

15 Round about her tomb they go.

Midnight assist our moan,

Help us to sigh and groan.

Heavily heavily.

Graves yawn, and yield your dead

20 Till death be utterèd,

Heavily, heavily.

[CLAUDIO] Now unto thy bones good night,

Yearly will I do this right.

PRINCE Good morrow, masters, put your torches out.

25 The wolves have preyed, and look, the gentle day

Before the wheels of Phoebus round about

Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey:

Thanks to you all, and leave us, fare you well.

CLAUDIO Good morrow, masters, each his several way.

30 PRINCE Come, let us hence, and put on other weeds,

And then to Leonato's we will go.

CLAUDIO And Hymen now with luckier issue speed's

Then this for whom we rendered up this woe. *Exeunt.*

Sc. 16 5.3.0 *Enter . . . tapers*

Though modern productions often use dim lighting and an elaborate tomb or full graveyard for this scene, early productions may have used candles or torches to suggest darkness, and could have hung the epitaph on a stage column.

5.3.2–10 *Epitaph . . . dumb*

In the modern tradition, this speech is assigned to Claudio, who may be performing a sort of public confession and penance as he reads. Alternatively, a random lord may read the epitaph and the emphasis may instead be on Claudio's reaction, which may be distraught or somewhat callous.

5.3.11.1 *Song* The music may come from offstage, and from one or more singers, though many performances prefer Balthasar accompanied by onstage musicians.

5.2.71 *old coil* a great to-do

5.2.74 *presently* at once

5.2.76–7 I . . . *eyes* i.e. stock phrases from love poems, which he rejects for plain speech

5.2.76 *die* puns on sense of 'orgasm'

Sc. 16 5.3.1 *monument* i.e. family tomb

5.3.5 *guerdon* recompense

5.3.12 *goddess . . . night* Diana; compare notes to 4.1.52

5.3.13 *knight* follower or votary, i.e. Hero

5.3.19 *yawn* open wide

5.3.20 *utterèd* commemorated (expressed)

5.3.26 *wheels . . . Phoebus* the sun god, Phoebus (or Apollo), was depicted driving a chariot across the sky

5.3.29 *several* own (separate)

5.3.30 *weeds* clothes

5.3.32 *Hymen* goddess of marriage

5.3.32 *issue* outcome

5.3.32 *speed's* speed us (favour us)

## 5.4

Sc. 17 *Enter Leonato, Benedick, Margaret, Ursula, [Beatrice, Antonio, an] old man, Friar [Francis], Hero*

FRIAR Did I not tell you she was innocent?

LEONATO So are the Prince and Claudio who accused her

Upon the error that you heard debated.

But Margaret was in some fault for this,

5 Although against her will as it appears

In the true course of all the question.

BROTHER Well, I am glad that all things sorts so well.

BENEDICK And so am I, being else by faith enforced

To call young Claudio to a reckoning for it.

10 LEONATO Well, daughter, and you gentlewomen all,

Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,

And when I send for you come hither masked.

*[Exit Beatrice, Hero, Margaret, and Ursula]*

The Prince and Claudio promised by this hour

To visit me. *[To Antonio]* You know your office, brother,

15 You must be father to your brother's daughter,

And give her to young Claudio.

BROTHER Which I will do with confirmed countenance.

BENEDICK Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think.

FRIAR To do what, Signor?

20 BENEDICK To bind me, or undo me, one of them.

Signor Leonato, truth it is, good Signor,

Your niece regards me with an eye of favour.

LEONATO That eye my daughter lent her, 'tis most true.

BENEDICK And I do with an eye of love requite her.

25 LEONATO The sight whereof I think you had from me,

From Claudio and the Prince. But what's your will?

BENEDICK Your answer, sir, is enigmatical.

But for my will, my will is your good will

May stand with ours this day to be conjoined

30 In the state of honourable marriage,

In which (good Friar) I shall desire your help.

LEONATO My heart is with your liking.

FRIAR And my help.

Here comes the Prince and Claudio.

*Enter Prince, and Claudio, and two or three other [attendants].*

PRINCE Good morrow to this fair assembly.

35 LEONATO Good morrow, Prince. Good morrow, Claudio,

We here attend you. Are you yet determined

Today to marry with my brother's daughter?

Sc. 17 5.4.3 Upon as a result of

5.4.3 debated discussed

5.4.5 against . . . will unwittingly

5.4.6 true just; proper; truth-revealing

5.4.6 question questioning (examination)

5.4.7 sorts turn out

5.4.8 else otherwise

5.4.8 faith promise; honour

5.4.9 reckoning settlement of debts, i.e. a duel

5.4.14 office task

5.4.17 confirmed countenance straight face (resolution)

5.4.18 pains efforts (help)

5.4.20 bind tie up (in marriage)

5.4.20 undo ruin (by marriage); answers 'bind' with sense of 'untie'

5.4.28 for as for

5.4.29 stand join

5.4.36 yet still

5.4.36 determined resolved; prepared or settled

CLAUDIO I'll hold my mind were she an Ethiope.

LEONATO Call her forth, brother, here's the Friar ready. *[Exit Antonio]*

40 PRINCE Good morrow, Benedick. Why, what's the matter  
that you have such a February face,  
So full of frost, of storm, and cloudiness?

CLAUDIO I think he thinks upon the savage bull.

45 Tush, fear not, man, we'll tip thy horns with gold,  
And all Europa shall rejoice at thee,  
As once Europa did at lusty Jove  
When he would play the noble beast in love.

BENEDICK Bull Jove, sir, had an amiable low,  
And some such strange bull leapt your father's cow

50 And got a calf in that same noble feat  
Much like to you, for you have just his bleat.

*Enter [Antonio, Leonato's] brother [with] Hero, Beatrice, Margaret,  
Ursula [masked]*

CLAUDIO For this I owe you. Here comes other reck'nings.  
Which is the lady I must seize upon?

LEONATO This same is she, and I do give you her.

55 CLAUDIO Why then she's mine. Sweet, let me see your face.

LEONATO No, that you shall not till you take her hand  
Before this Friar and swear to marry her.

CLAUDIO *[to Hero]* Give me your hand before this holy friar.  
I am your husband if you like of me.

60 HERO And when I lived I was your other wife;  
And when you loved, you were my other husband.

CLAUDIO Another Hero!

HERO Nothing certainer.

One Hero died defiled, but I do live,  
And surely as I live, I am a maid.

65 PRINCE The former Hero, Hero that is dead!

LEONATO She died, my lord, but whiles her slander lived.

FRIAR All this amazement can I qualify  
When after that the holy rites are ended,  
I'll tell you largely of fair Hero's death,

70 Meantime let wonder seem familiar,  
And to the chapel let us presently.

BENEDICK Soft and fair, Friar, which is Beatrice?

BEATRICE I answer to that name, what is your will?

Sc. 17 5.4.43–7 I . . . love  
Claudio's treatment of  
Benedick may be friendly or  
cold and biting, making it  
clear that he has not entirely  
forgiven Benedick.

5.4.54, 56 LEONATO These  
lines are sometimes given to  
Leonato's brother (to keep up  
the illusion that the bride is  
really Leonato's brother's  
daughter). Sometimes  
Leonato simply can't help  
himself and takes over from  
his brother.

5.4.38 **Ethiope** Ethiopian, or more generically someone of  
different race; compare 2.1.242

5.4.41 **February** i.e. gloomy or wintry (frowning)

5.4.43 **upon** about

5.4.43 **savage bull** compare note to 1.1.191

5.4.44 **tip . . . gold** i.e. like an idol; possibly means 'grace your  
marriage', once again equating wedlock with cuckoldry

5.4.45 **Europa** Europe

5.4.45 **rejoice at** worship

5.4.46–7 As . . . **love** Jove took the form of a bull to carry the  
beautiful Phoenician princess, Europa, with whom he fell in love,  
to Crete

5.4.49 **strange** other (stranger), also epithet for an illicit sexual  
partner; compare *Cymbeline* 1.4.80

5.4.49 **leapt** mounted sexually (more bull/horn/cuckoldry image  
play)

5.4.50 **calf** (illegitimate) child; fool

5.4.51 **Much like** very similar

5.4.51 **bleat** i.e. the higher voice of a calf nonetheless resembling  
the sire bull's low, with added sense of irritating, incessant,  
foolish talk

5.4.52 **owe you** i.e. owe you one back

5.4.52 **reck'nings** matters that need settling

5.4.53 **seize upon** take (legal) possession of

5.4.59 **like of** like

5.4.67 **qualify** moderate (calm)

5.4.69 **largely** fully

5.4.70 **wonder** feelings of wonder

5.4.70 **familiar** normal

5.4.71 **presently** at once

5.4.72 **Soft . . . fair** gently, i.e. slow down

- BENEDICK Do not you love me?  
 BEATRICE Why no, no more than reason.  
 75 BENEDICK Why then, your uncle, and the Prince, and Claudio,  
 Have been deceived, they swore you did.  
 BEATRICE Do not you love me?  
 BENEDICK Troth no, no more than reason.  
 BEATRICE Why then, my cousin, Margaret, and Ursula  
 Are much deceived, for they did swear you did.  
 80 BENEDICK They swore that you were almost sick for me.  
 BEATRICE They swore that you were wellnigh dead for me.  
 BENEDICK 'Tis no such matter. Then you do not love me?  
 BEATRICE No, truly, but in friendly recompense.  
 LEONATO Come, cousin, I am sure you love the gentleman.  
 85 CLAUDIO And I'll be sworn upon't, that he loves her,  
 For here's a paper written in his hand,  
 A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,  
 Fashioned to Beatrice.  
 HERO And here's another,  
 Writ in my cousin's hand, stolen from her pocket,  
 90 Containing her affection unto Benedick.  
 BENEDICK A miracle! Here's our own hands against our hearts. Come,  
 I will have thee, but by this light I take thee for pity.  
 BEATRICE I would not deny you, but by this good day, I yield upon great  
 persuasion, and partly to save your life, for I was told you were in a  
 95 consumption.  
 LEONATO Peace, I will stop your mouth!  
 PRINCE How dost thou, Benedick the married man?  
 BENEDICK I'll tell thee what, Prince: a college of wit-crackers cannot  
 flout me out of my humour. Dost thou think I care for a satire or an  
 100 epigram? No, if a man will be beaten with brains, 'a shall wear  
 nothing handsome about him. In brief, since I do purpose to marry, I  
 will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it, and  
 therefore never flout at me, for what I have said against it. For man is a  
 giddy thing, and this is my conclusion. For thy part, Claudio, I did think  
 105 to have beaten thee, but in that thou art like to be my kinsman, live  
 unbruised, and love my cousin.  
 CLAUDIO I had well hoped thou wouldst have denied Beatrice, that I  
 might have cudgelled thee out of thy single life to make thee a double  
 dealer, which out of question thou wilt be, if my cousin do not look  
 110 exceeding narrowly to thee.

5.4.96 LEONATO Many modern performances (and editions) give this line to Benedick and have Benedick 'stop her mouth' with a kiss.

5.4.83 **recompense** repayment, i.e. mutuality  
 5.4.84 **cousin** compare note to 1.2.1  
 5.4.87 **halting** limping, i.e. metrically awkward  
 5.4.87 **pure brain** i.e. invention (composition)  
 5.4.91 **hands** handwriting  
 5.4.91 **against** contrary to  
 5.4.94–5 **in . . . consumption** wasting away  
 5.4.98 **college** school; club; assembly  
 5.4.99 **flout** mock  
 5.4.99 **humour** mood  
 5.4.100 **beaten** battered; defeated  
 5.4.100 **with** with; by  
 5.4.100 **brains** witty remarks; compare 2.3.186–90

5.4.100–1 **a . . . him** he shall never wear fashionable clothes (which were a popular target for satire); beyond the metaphor, he means never achieve anything good  
 5.4.101 **purpose** intend  
 5.4.102 **purpose** effect  
 5.4.104 **giddy** flighty; unsteady (inconstant)  
 5.4.104 **this . . . conclusion** this is what I conclude; this is where I stop talking; this is where I've ended up (in marriage)  
 5.4.104 **For . . . part** i.e. in all this (as for you)  
 5.4.105 **in that** since  
 5.4.105 **like** likely  
 5.4.105 **kinsman** family member (through marriage)  
 5.4.108 **cudgelled** beaten  
 5.4.108–9 **double dealer** married man; unfaithful husband  
 5.4.110 **narrowly** closely



BENEDICK Come, come, we are friends, let's have a dance ere we are married, that we may lighten our own hearts, and our wives' heels.

LEONATO We'll have dancing afterward.

BENEDICK First, of my word, therefore play music. Prince, thou art  
115 sad—get thee a wife, get thee a wife! There is no staff more reverent then one tipped with horn.

*Enter Messenger.*

MESSENGER My Lord, your brother John is ta'en in flight,  
And brought with armed men back to Messina.

BENEDICK Think not on him till tomorrow, I'll devise thee brave  
120 punishments for him. Strike up, pipers. *Dance.*

*FINIS.*

5.4.111 Come . . . dance  
Some productions highlight the Prince looking on forlornly as Beatrice and Benedick lead the final dance.

5.4.120 Strike . . . pipers  
Some productions introduce a reprise of 'Sigh no more, ladies' to close the play, which may have a somewhat ironic effect on the happy ending.

5.4.112 **lighten** . . . **heels** i.e. make our wives' heels lighter for dancing, with sexual pun (compare note to 3.4.143)

5.4.114 **of** by

5.4.115–16 **There** . . . **horn** complex nest of puns on cuckoldry basically saying that there's no better state than marriage (and the cuckoldry that comes with it)

5.4.115 **staff** walking stick; staff of office (sign of rule, figuratively in a married man); wife (a support for her husband); penis

5.4.115 **reverent** revered (for age and wisdom); worthy

5.4.116 **tipped** set or decorated at the top (walking stick) ; variant

of 'tupped' (mounted sexually, as by a horned and horny ram); plays on 'tipstaff', a court officer; dipped (as at 5.4.43), with obvious sexual undertone

5.4.116 **horn** literally horn as a decoration for an old man's walking stick (old men were typically depicted as cuckolds); cuckold's horns; penis

5.4.117 **ta'en** taken (captured)

5.4.117 **in flight** attempting to flee

5.4.119 **brave** fine (worthy)